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Walter Besant

THE WORLD WENT VERY WELL THEN

BY

WALTER BESANT

AUTHOR OF

'ALL SORTS AND CONDITIONS OF MEN' 'DOROTHY FORSTER'
'CHILDREN OF GIBEON' ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I.

WITH A PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR BY JOHN PETTIE, R.A.
AND ILLUSTRATIONS BY A. FORESTIER

London

CHATTO & WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1887

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PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
LONDON

TO

JOHN PETTIE, R.A.

I dedicate this book, in memory of certain pleasant hours passed in Fitzjohn's Avenue in November 1886, *of which the frontispiece is the outcome, and in acknowledgement of the patience and skill of the Artist.*

WALTER BESANT.

UNITED UNIVERSITY CLUB,
Feb. 1887.

PREFACE.

I BEG to express my best thanks to Mr. William Ingram, who has most generously placed at my disposal, for reproduction, the drawings of Mr. Forestier, made originally for the 'Illustrated London News,' where this story first appeared. I have also to thank Mr. Charles Eden for kindly pointing out and correcting for me certain slips due to the fact that the writer of this narrative, Luke Anguish, was a landsman, though a painter of ships.

Those who wish to know the foundation of the story will find it in the Chronicles of Deptford, and on a tombstone in the Church of St. Nicolas.

I desire also to be allowed a word of personal explanation. Many people have written to me asking how I can write two novels at once, because during the time that this tale was running in the 'Illustrated London News,' the 'Children of Gibeon' was concluding in 'Longman's Magazine.' I cannot, as a matter of fact, write two novels at once, and I should be very much afraid to try such an experiment. The following are the facts and dates:

In October 1883, I finished the story of 'Dorothy Forster,' which was published in the 'Graphic,' January–June 1884, and by Messrs. Chatto & Windus in May 1884.

On the completion of 'Dorothy Forster,' I began the 'Children of Gibeon,' which occupied me until May 1885. In the summer of 1885 I began 'The World went very Well Then.' The first half of this was sent in to Mr. Ingram in April of 1886, and the rest in June. So

far, therefore, from writing two novels at once, the two which ran partly at the same time were written quite separately, the first taking eighteen months and the second about thirteen months.

W. B.

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'A small back parlour behind an apothecary's shop.'

THE WORLD WENT VERY WELL THEN.

CHAPTER I.

HOW JACK HEARD TALK OF LANDS BEYOND THE SEA.

IN a small back parlour, behind an apothecary's shop, were sitting two boys and a girl. The boys

were aged respectively twelve years and ten; the elder of them was a tall and strongly-built lad, with curling hair of a dark brown, and eyes of much the same colour; the younger, fair-haired, and of slighter proportions. The girl was nine; but she looked more, being tall for her age. Her hair was so dark that it looked almost black. It hung loose, in long curls or ripples, not being coarse and thick, as happens, generally, with hair that is quite black, but fine in texture and lustrous to look upon. Her eyes, too, were black and large. The elder boy and the girl sat side-by-side in the window-seat, while the other boy sat at the table, having a pencil in his hand and a piece of paper before him, on which he was drawing, idly, whatever came into his head. All three were silent, save that the elder boy from time to time whispered the girl, or pinched her ear, or pulled her hair, when she would shake her head and smile, and point to the great chair beside the fire, as much as to say, 'If it were not for that chair, Jack, and the person in it, I would box thy ears.'

It was not a cold day. The sun shone through the lattice window, and fell upon the heads of the two who sat together, and motes innumerable danced merrily in the light; yet there was a coal fire burning in the grate. On one hob simmered a saucepan, with some broth in it or compound of simples (while the children sat waiting, the apothecary's assistant stepped in noiselessly, lifted the lid, took out a spoonful, sighed, tasted it, shook his head for the nastiness of it, and went back into the shop). On the other hob stood a kettle, singing comfortably—kept there always, day and night, but not for making tea, I promise you. As for the room itself, it was exactly like a ship's cabin, being narrow and low, and fitted with shelves and drawers. On one side was a pallet, something like a bunk in an officer's cabin, with a flock mattress upon it, and a pair of blankets rolled up snug. Here the apothecary slept when the weather was cold—that is to say, nearly all the year round. Herbs and drugs tied in bundles hung from the rafters, as onions hang in a farm-house; the window was a lattice,

with small diamond panes set in lead; above the mantel-shelf hung a silver watch; on the shelf itself stood a pair of brass candlesticks, the model of a ship full rigged—her name written in red ink on a wooden stand, 'The King Solomon, of Bristol'—a pair of ship's pistols, a tobacco jar, and two or three long pipes. The apothecary's great wig, which he wore every evening at the club, hung from a peg on the wall behind the elbow chair; and in the corner of the room opposite the chair there was a very fearful and terrible thing, until you grew accustomed to it, when you ceased to fear it. This was nothing less than a stick painted red and black, with bright-coloured feathers tied round it, and surmounted by a grinning human skull. It was a magic stick, called, we were told, the Ekpenyong, or skull stick, by the Mandingo sorcerers—a thing only to be handled by an Obeah man, the possession of which is supposed by negroes either to confer or to proclaim wonderful powers, and cut from a juju or holy tree. Beside it lay two musical instruments, also from Africa—one a

hollow block of wood covered with a sheepskin, and the other a kind of rude guitar. This stick it was which caused the apothecary to be greatly respected by the Admiral's negroes, as you will presently hear. He who has such a stick can catch the shadow, as they say—that is, the soul of a man; and set Obi upon him —that is to say, bring suffering, sorrow, and shame upon him. So that the possessor of a skull-stick is a person greatly to be feared and envied.

There was an open cupboard beside the fire, in which were household stores, such as bacon, cheese, butter, bread, strings of onions, a two-gallon jar or firkin of rum, plates and knives, for the room was a kitchen as well as an eating-room and a sleeping-room. Once a week or so, if business was slack and there was nothing else to do, the assistant might, if he thought of it, come with a broom, and sweep the dust out into the street. But I do not remember that the room was ever washed. And what with the tobacco, the stores in the cupboard, the rum, the drugs hanging from

the rafters, and the contents of the shelves, the place had, to a sailor, exactly the smell of the cockpit or orlop deck after a long voyage; for in that part of the ship are kept the purser's stores, the bo's'n's stores, the spirit-room, the surgeon's store-room, the midshipmen's berths and their mess. For this reason, perhaps, its owner, who had been a sailor, would never open the window; and always, on returning home, sniffed the air of the room with a peculiar satisfaction.

The great chair—which might have served for the chair of a hall-porter, having a broad, low seat and a high back with arms—was stuffed or padded with three or four pillows, and in the midst of the pillows lay an old man sleeping. This was Mr. Brinjes, the famous apothecary of Deptford. He was small of stature and thin; his face (over one eye was a black patch) was creased and lined like a russet apple, which shrinks before it rots; his chin was hollow; his head, covered with a padded silk night-cap, was sunk deep in the pillows like a child's; he lay upon his side; his feet,

stretched out, were propped on a footstool; one hand was under his cheek, and the other hung over the arm of the chair (you might have noticed that the skin of his hand was wrinkled and loose, as if the bones belonged to an occupant smaller than was at first intended). As he lay asleep there, he looked like one in extreme old age, such as may be seen in country villages, where they take a pride in showing the visitor, in proof of the healthiness of the country air, some old gaffer of a hundred years and more sitting before a fire.

Through the open door could be seen the shop. It was small, like the parlour behind it. The rafters were hung with dried herbs; the shelves were full of bottles. There was a chair for the reception of those patients who could not stand; there was a counter, with scales great and small; a pestle and mortar; a box containing surgical instruments—the pincers for pulling out teeth, the cup, the basin, the blister, and the other horrid tools of the surgeon's craft. The apothecary's assistant stood at the counter, rolling pills and mixing medi-

cines—a sallow, pasty-faced youth with a pair of swivel eyes, which moved with independent action; a young man who walked about without noise, and worked all day without stopping, yet looked discontented, perhaps because he was compelled to taste the medicines, and his stomach kicked thereat. The shop door was always open, for the window gave little light, partly because it was never cleaned, partly because there was a shelf with bottles before it, and partly because the glass was full of bull's-eyes, which gave strength, no doubt, yet kept the room obscure. At the end of the counter was the stool on which Mr. Brinjes sat every morning, in his gown and night-cap, from eight o'clock until half-past twelve, receiving patients. Before him, on the counter, was a great book containing, I now suppose, a Repertory or Collection of Instructions concerning Symptoms of Diseases and Methods of Treatment; but the common sort always supposed that it was a book of Spells, and the means by which Mr. Brinjes was enabled to communicate with a Certain Poten-

tate, who helped him and did his bidding, at what price and for what reward these people freely whispered to each other. On Sunday morning (this must have been a bitter Bolus to the Evil one) Mr. Brinjes and his assistant let blood gratis to whoever wished for that wholesome refreshment; and every morning he pulled out teeth at a shilling or half a crown (according to the means of the customer), his assistant holding the patient in his chair, and receiving those kicks and cuffs which in the extremity of his agony the sufferer too often deals out.

In such a town as Deptford it is natural that the common people should resort to the herb-woman for the cure of their ailments. It was not until she had failed that they came to Mr. Brinjes, and then with doubt whether he would choose to treat them. As for his power to cure, if he pleased, there was no doubt about that. It was whispered that he knew of charms by which he could constrain a person, even in the misery of toothache, to fall sound asleep, and continue asleep while Mr. Brinjes

would take out a tooth without causing him to awaken, or to feel any pain whatever; but these things we may not believe, however well authenticated, unless we would seriously accuse him of magic. As for fevers, rheumatisms, difficulty of breathing, coughs, scurvy, and the other afflictions by which we are reminded that this is but a transitory world, it was believed, even by the better sort of Deptford, that there was no physician in London itself more skilful than Mr. Brinjes, and that by certain preparations, the secret of which he alone knew, and had learned in his voyages in foreign parts, especially on the West Coast of Africa, where the negroes possess many strange secrets of nature, he had acquired a singular mastery over every kind of disease. He has been known, as I myself who write this history can testify (it was in the case of Admiral Sayer's great toe), to relieve a man in one hour of the gout, though he had been roaring for a fortnight with his foot tied up in flannel. It was also whispered of Mr. Brinjes that by magic or witchcraft he could bring diseases

upon those who offended him, and that he could avert all the misfortunes to which mankind are liable in shipwreck, drowning, wounds, and death. But it is idle to repeat the things which were said of him. Certain it is that he possessed wonderful secrets for the cure of disease, however he came by them. Warts he removed merely by looking at them, and by a prophecy that they would be gone in so many days; a sprained ankle he would set at ease by simply rubbing the part with his open hand; sciatica, lumbago, pleurisy, and other such disorders he healed in the same way, foretelling on each occasion how long it would be before the malady would cease. Those who were so treated declared that the apothecary's hand became like a red-hot iron in the rubbing. Rheumatism, it was certain, he cured by making the patient carry a potato in his pocket; though what he did, if he did anything, to the potato first, in order to endow it with this virtue, is not known. As for ear-ache, faceache, toothache, tic, and such disorders, it was believed that he could order their removal

at will. Further, it was said of him, that he could, also at will, command these diseases to seize upon a man and torture him. How he did this, no one can explain; but the testimony of many, still living, proves that he did it. I pass over the report that, in calling these pains to seize upon a man, his one eye glowed like a red-hot coal, and sent forth flashes of fire. Such rumours show only how much he was feared and respected by the people. They came to him also for amulets and charms, which he did not always refuse to give, for protecting those who carried them from drowning, hanging, burning, the shot of cannon, and the stroke of steel. It is true that his amulets were simple things: we cannot understand how the tooth of a snake, even with the poison in it, can avail against drowning if one who cannot swim should tumble into deep water; nor how the head of a frog, wrapped in silk, can, without any other magic, protect a man against the gallows. But there are many other things, which everybody believes, quite as difficult to explain: as, for instance, why the gall of the barbel causeth

blindness; why cock ale cureth consumption; why an onion hung round the neck of a beast, and the next day boiled and buried, cureth distemper in cattle; or why the finger cut from the hand of a hanged man taketh away a wen. Yet these are in the nature of amulets, as much as any of those prepared by Mr. Brinjes. At this time he had been in the town some fifteen years, having appeared one day about the year 1725. Nobody knew who he was or whence he came; his parentage, his christian name, his birthplace were all unknown. He never spoke of any relations; and at his first coming he seemed to be as old as now, so that some, when they saw the sign of the Silver Mortar put up, and the gallipots ranged in the shop, laughed to think of so old and decrepit a man beginning trade as an apothecary.

Whatever his age, he was not decrepit; but strong and hale, though shrunken in figure, with a wrinkled skin and a face covered with lines and crow's-feet. He suffered from no ailments, was always brisk and active, and had, in his talk and understanding, no apparent touch

of age. Further, it soon became known that here was a man who could effect marvellous cures, so that the people began to flock to him, not only from Deptford and the riverside, where he first courted custom, but also from Greenwich, on the one hand, and Redriff, Bermondsey, and Southwark, on the other.

He received these people every day—from eight in the morning until half-past twelve—dressed in a ragged old gown, gone into holes at the elbows, and well-nigh dropping to pieces; on his head, an old night-cap; and on his feet, slippers tied with tape. But slovenly as was his dress, and unworthy the dignity of a physician, he was sharp and quick with the patients, telling them plainly, while he gave them medicine, whether they would recover or when they would die, and whether he could help them or no. At the stroke of half-past twelve, he got off his stool and retired to his parlour, where, with his own hand, he every day fried or griddled a great piece of beefsteak, with a mess of onions, carrots, and other vegetables, and presently devoured it, with a tankard

of black beer, choosing to do everything with his own hand, even to the filling of his kettle and the washing of his dishes, rather than have a woman-servant in the place. This done, he made up the fire, put away his plates, settled himself among his pillows, and fell fast asleep. Thus he continued for two or three hours, no one daring to disturb him or to make the least noise. When, on this day, he began to move, stretching out first one leg, and then the other, turning over on his back, and fidgeting with his hands, the elder boy nodded to the younger, who reached a bundle of papers from the topmost shelf, and laid them on the table as if in readiness. This done, they waited.

The old man yawned, sighed, and opened his remaining eye—'twas a pale blue eye of amazing keenness and brightness. Then he sat up suddenly with a start, and looked about him with a quick suspicious glance, as if he had been sleeping in some place where there were wild animals to fear, or savage men. You could then perceive that his features were sharp, and apparently not much altered by his

years; his chin being long and pointed, his lips firm, and his nose straight, as if he was a masterful man, who would have his way. As for his remaining eye (no one ever learned where the sight of the other had been lost), though it was so bright, it had a quick and watchful expression, such as may be perceived in the eyes of those creatures who both hunt and are hunted. You will not see this look in the eyes of Dido the Lioness of the Tower, because the lion hunts but is never hunted. Being reassured as to tigers or fierce Indians, Mr. Brinjes rose from the chair, and as if not yet wholly awake, yet already conscious, he took a glass and half filled it with rum; then, with the utmost care and nicety (your drinkers of rum-punch care very little how much rum is in the glass, but are greatly afraid of putting in too much of the other components), added sugar, lemon, and water; this done, he stirred the contents, rolled it about in the glass, and drank half of it.

'I have again returned,' he said, 'to the world of life. To all of us who are old,

when we close our eyes in sleep we know not whether we shall not keep them closed in death, which sometimes thus surprises those who have lived long. But I have returned—aha!—and with reasonable prospect of another evening of tobacco and punch.' Here he sipped his liquor. 'I take this glass of punch, boys,' he explained, 'for the good of the stomach, and the prevention of ill-humours and vapours; otherwise these might rise to the brain, which is a part of man's mechanism more delicate than any other, and as easily put off the balance as the mainspring of a watch.' Here he drank again, but slowly, and by sips, as becomes one who loves his drink. 'I am now old; when a man is old he is fortunate if he can breathe free, sleep sound, walk upright, eat his dinner, and still drink his punch. Some men there are, not so old as myself—no, not by ten years—who fetch their breath with difficulty, whereas I breathe freely; others are troubled and cannot sleep for racking pains, whereas I have none; and others cannot eat strong meats, and would die—poor devils!—

of a bowl of punch. Better be dead than live like that; better lie buried with a mile of blue water over your head, and the whales flopping around your grave on the seaweed. There can be no more comfortable and quiet lying than the bottom of the sea.' He shook his head solemnly. 'When a man cannot any longer fight and make love, there is but one thing left to rejoice his heart.' He finished the glass. 'And when he cannot drink, let him die.'

He sat down again in his great chair; but he sat upright, looking about him, now thoroughly awake and alert.

'In sleep,' he said, 'it is as if one were already dead; awake, it is as if one could not die. Ha! Death is impossible. The blood it runs as strong, the pulse it beats as steady, as when I was a boy of thirty. Why, I am young still! I am full of life! Give me fifty years more—only a poor, short fifty years—what is it when the time is gone?—and I will make, look you, such a medicine as shall keep a man alive for ever! It will be done some day, alas! when I am gone. It will be too late for me,

and I must die. But not yet—not yet. Oh! we are born too soon—a hundred years and more too soon. When a man is old he is apt to feel the near presence of Death. Not, mind you, when he is asleep, or when he is awake, but when he is between the two. Then he sees the dart aimed at his heart, and the scythe ready to cut him down, and the bony fingers clutching at his throat. It is as if life were slipping from him, just as the pirate's plank slips under the weight of the prisoner who has to walk upon it.'

'When a man's time comes,' said Jack, with wisdom borrowed from his friends at Trinity Hospital; 'when a man's time comes, down he goes.'

'Ay. It's easy talking when you are young; and your time hasn't come by many a day; the words drop out glib, and seem to mean nothing. Wait, my lad; wait till you have had your day. To every man his day. First the fat time, then the lean time; or else it's first the lean time, then the fat time. For most, old age is the lean time. But the world

is full of justice, and there is always a fat time in every man's life. When there's peace upon the seas, the merchantman sails free and happy, buying skins and ivory, spices and precious woods, for glass beads and cotton. So trade prospers. And then the King's sailors and marines and the privateers must needs turn smugglers; and so find their way to the gallows. Then cometh war again, and the honest fellows have another turn with fighting and taking of prizes and cutting out of convoys. Yes, boys; the world is full of justice, did we but rightly consider; and everyone doth get his chance. As for you, Bess, my girl, it shall be a brave lover, in the days when thou shalt be a lovely girl and a goddess. As for you, boys—well—and presently you will become old men like unto me.' He sighed heavily. 'And then'—he took the saucepan from the hob, stirred it about, and smelled the stuff that was simmering in it—'I doubt if this mixture——Children, we are all born a hundred years too soon—a hundred years, at least. Yet, if I had but fifty years before me, I think I

could find the secret to stay old age and put off natural decay. The Coromantyns are said to have the secret, but they keep it to themselves; and I have questioned Philadelphy, who is a Mandingo, in vain. Well'—again he sighed, as he put back his saucepan—'I have slept, and I am alive again, with another evening before me, and more punch. Let us be thankful. Jack, unroll the charts, and let me look upon the world again.'

The charts, which the younger boy had already laid upon the table, were stained and thumb-marked parchments, originally drawn by some Spanish hand, for the names were all in Spanish; but they had been much altered and corrected by a later hand—perhaps that of Mr. Brinjes himself. They showed the Atlantic and the Indian Oceans, together with a map of the Eastern Islands and the unknown Magellanica or Terra Australis. The last named was traversed by several lines in blue ink, showing the routes of voyagers both early and recent, each with a name written above it; as Magellans, 1520; Francis D'Ovalle, 1582; Mendana,

1595; Drake, 1577; Candish, 1586; Oliver Noort, 1599; Le Maire, 1615; Tasman, 1642; John Cook, 1683; Woodes Rodgers, 1708; Clipperton, 1719; Shelvocke, at the same time. There was another route laid down across the ocean, much more devious than any of the others, and without name, and marked in red ink.

When these maps were spread out upon the table, Mr. Brinjes rose and stood gazing upon them, as if, by the mere contemplation of the coast lines, he was enabled actually to see the places which he had visited or heard of. There was no place in the whole world that is visited by ships (because I do not pretend that Mr. Brinjes knew the interior of the great continents) whereof he could not speak as from personal knowledge, describing its appearance, the character of the people, the soundings, and the nature of the port or roadstead.

But mostly Mr. Brinjes loved to talk of pirates, rovers, or adventurers, whether of Queen Elizabeth's reign, when they had a golden time indeed, or of our own time, which

has seen many of these gentry; though now, instead of receiving knighthood, as was formerly the custom, they are generally taken ashore and hoisted on a gibbet. Thus, Mr. Brinjes would lay his forefinger on the island of Madagascar, and tell us of Captain Avery and his settlement on the north of this great island, where every one of his men became like a little Sultan or King, each with a troop of slaves, and being no better than Pagans, every man with a seragho of black wives. For aught anybody knows to the contrary, they or their sons are living on the island in splendour to this day, though their famous captain hath long since been dead. Or he would point out the island of Providence, in the Bahamas, where there was formerly a rendezvous, which continued for many years, of those who combined together to prey upon the Spanish commerce. 'And think not, boys,' said Mr. Brinjes, solemnly, 'that to sail in search of the great Plate ships can be called piracy, for pirates are the common enemies of all flags, and must be hanged when they are taken prisoners; where-

as, he who takes or sinks a Spanish vessel performs a meritorious action, and one that he will remember with gratitude upon his death-bed, since they are a nation more bloodthirsty, cruel, and avaricious than any other, and Papists to boot. It is true that there were some of those who sailed from Providence, that took other ships, of whom Major Bonnet was one. Boys, I knew the Major well. He was a gentleman of good family from Barbadoes, and I cannot but think that he was unlawfully hanged, the evidence being suborned. A man of kindly and pleasing manners, who loved the bowl and a song, and was greatly loved by all his crew and those who knew him. But he is gone now, and those like unto him as well, so that the Spaniard sails the Atlantic in peace, though we have robbed him of some of his dominions. Alas! what things the Spanish Main hath witnessed! what deeds of daring, and what sufferings!'

Then he pushed this chart aside, and considered that which showed the West Coast of Africa, a part of the world which he regarded

with a particular admiration, though I have always understood that it is full of fevers and diseases of a deadly kind. He knew, indeed, all the harbours, creeks, river mouths, and other places from Old Calabar to the Gambia, where such notorious desperadoes as Captain Teach, otherwise called Blackbeard, or as Captain Bartholomew Roberts, made their rendezvous, where they refitted, and whence they sailed to plunder the merchantmen of all countries. These men Mr. Brinjes knew well, and spoke of them as if they had been friends of his own, and especially the latter. I know not in what manner he acquired this knowledge of a man who was certainly a most profligate villain. He it was whose squadron of three ships was destroyed by Captain Sir Chaloner Ogle, of the 'Swallow,' in the year 1722, the pirate himself being killed in the first broadside, and fifty-two of his men afterwards hung in chains along the coast near Cape Coast Castle.

'Boys,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'those who know not the West Coast of Africa know not what it is to live. What? Here, there are magis-

trates and laws; there, every man does what he pleases. Here, the rich take all; there, all is divided. Here, men go to law; there, men fight it out. What do they know here of the fierce passions which burn in men's hearts under the African sun? There is summer all the year round; there are fruits which you can never taste; there are——but you would not understand. How long ago since I have seen those green shores and wooded hills, and watched the black girls lying in the sun, and took my punch with the merry blades who now are dead and gone? Strange that the world should be so full of fine places, and we should be content to live in this land of fog and cold!'

Then he pushed this chart away also, and took another, that of the great Pacific Ocean, marked, as I have said, with half a dozen routes, and especially by a broad red line, without a name or date. When Mr. Brinjes laid his finger on this route he became serious and thoughtful.

'It is forty years,' he began, 'forty years

since I sailed upon these seas. Of all the crew, doth any survive save me alone? Forty years! The men were not so fierce as those on the West Coast—the air is milder—they would rest and sleep in the shade rather than fight. Forty years ago!'

The boys were silent till he should choose to tell us more.

'On board that ship I was rated as surgeon, and at first had plenty to do, sewing up wounds and healing broken heads; for, though there was a rule against fighting, it was a reckless company of rum-drinking, quarrelsome, fighting devils as ever trod the deck. We had music on board: two horns, till one fell overboard; two violins, and a Welsh harp. In the evening, when there was no fighting, there was music and dancing. 'Twas a happy barky. It was a merchantman, and we shipped our crew and fitted out at Kingston first and Providence next.'

'Where the pirates used to assemble?' said Jack.

'True. The crew were mostly rovers.

What then? If you venture into the Pacific you must needs carry a fighting crew. We had plenty of arms and ammunition; and not a man on board but had been in a dozen actions by sea and land. But only a merchantman.'

Jack shook his head, as if there were doubts in his mind; then he laughed. Mr. Brinjes laid his hand on the red line where it began at Providence Island.

'Forty years ago! It was a voyage among seas where there's never a chart; among reefs and rocks not laid down, and along shores no sailors knew. The end of the voyage was disastrous, but the beginning promised well, for the men were full of heart if ever men were, and the prize we were after was worth taking.'

'Prize?' said Jack, 'for a merchantman?'

'Merchantman she was, this side Cape Horn. I only meant this side. When you double the Cape that is another matter. A man in those seas sails as happy under the Jolly Roger as under the Union Jack. A

merchantman she was, built at Bristol, christened the 'King Solomon,' 400 tons; and when we sailed she carried twenty-two long nine-pounders, and two three-pounders, with a crew of 170 men, besides a dozen or so of negro slaves. Don't you forget, my lad, there's only two flags in those seas—the Spaniard and the Jolly Roger. Take your choice, therefore.' He paused, to let that choice be taken. 'We sailed through Magellan's Straits, taking six weeks over the job, what with contrary winds and storms. When we got out of that place—which, I take it, is the worst navigation in the world—we steered nearly due north for Juan Fernandez, where the Spaniards go from the South American ports to fish. Here it is on the chart.' His finger was following the red track. 'A mighty pretty place it is. This is where Woodes Rodgers set ashore one of his men and left him alone. After watering, we sailed away, still north, to the Galapagos Islands, where the pirates rendezvous.'

'They were pirates, then, after all?' Jack interrupted.

'The Spaniards call them such; whereas, if they do fly the black flag, it is only to strike more terror into the enemy and make them quicker to cry for quarter. Pirates, were we? Well; pirates or not, there was no man on board that craft but was an honest Englishman by birth. At Galapagos Islands we laid up to scrape and tallow the vessel, and to cure the scurvy, which had already broken out, with the limes and oranges and bananas which grow wild there, as well as the tobacco plant. The pigs run wild there, too; and if the wells only ran rum as well as water, one might as well be in Heaven at once; and there would be no need for the sailor to put to sea any more, nor any wisdom in leaving those islands.' He sighed, thinking of pleasant days in the Galapagos. 'But we were not cruising in these seas for pleasure, and we had our work to do. Wherefore, we made haste and got to sea again. What were we cruising for? Why, my lads, in hopes of coming across the great Spanish galleon, which goes twice every year from Manilla to Acapulco and back laden with treasure, so that

every man on board, could we take that ship, would be made for life.

'When we left the Galapagos, every man's heart was light, and there was nothing on board but drinking, singing, and gambling, with a fair wind, and the ship taut and trim, and within a few days of the Spaniard's course. He sails these seas as if they were his own, with never a thought of trouble or meeting an enemy. We had fair weather for ten days, making, at a guess, a hundred and eighty knots a day on a nor'-west course; so that, after a week or so, we were in the latitude of Acapulco, and, according to my observations, two hundred miles west of that port—that is to say, almost in the track of the galleons, which sail, as is well known, in an even course about lat. 13° N. And for why? If you set sail from Manilla—here,' he pointed out that distant island on the chart, 'through the Strait of Mindovo, and past Cape Espiritu Santo, you have got, between the Ladrones and Acapulco, which is close upon two thousand knots, nothing but blue water. If any other nation beside the Spanish held these seas,

they would have been everywhere navigated long ago. But these lubbers care for nothing but to keep out of danger; wherefore they sail where there are no islands. Sometimes, by reason of contrary winds and the compass, which veers about in these waters as if the Devil had it, these ships are blown north and south. I have conversed with Spanish sailors who had been thus driven north, and they reported open seas, though the charts and maps do still lay down a continent between Asia and America.

'It is a most terrible voyage, full of dangers on account of the tempests which blow there, and because the crews have to live so long on salted provisions and bad water, whereby many grievous diseases are engendered, of which I learned something. There is, for instance, that disease which the Spaniards call the Lobillo, which doth commonly fall upon men who have been living at sea for many weeks upon this diet. I do not know the remedies, if any there be, for this affliction, whereby the body swells up like a bladder which is blown out, and the

patient falls to prattling and babbling, until he dies. There is also what they call the Dutch Disease, which attacks the gums, and is, I take it, nothing but scurvy, and can only be cured by being set ashore. Then there is an intolerable itching of the whole body, caused by the saltness the of beef and of the air. For this there is no remedy but patience and limes, when these can be procured. There are insects also, which the Spaniards call Gorgojos, which are said to be bred in the biscuit, and creep into the body, under the skin, whence they are difficult to dislodge, and do itch intolerably, day and night; so that some have been known to go mad with the discomfort of it and have leaped overboard.

'When, therefore, we were in the latitude where we might expect any day to see a sail —every sail being a Spanish ship, and every Spanish ship a rich galleon—a reward was offered to him who could first spy a sail. But here we were unlucky, for a hurricane fell upon us, drove us off our course, and for four days we scudded, looking for nothing else but destruction, being too low in the waist and too

high in the stern for such weather. However, by the Lord's help, the storm at length abated; but not before we were driven a long way north of our course, and in sight of the great island named California.' He covered it with his thumb. 'Nobody hath yet circumnavigated this island; but it is reported mountainous and sterile. Yet—Lord! what a place for rovers when they get the sense to make here a settlement for the annoyance of the Spaniard! Madagascar itself was not more plainly marked out by Providence for the use of rovers. I am old now, or else would I plant a colony myself, with a fleet of half a dozen frigates and a few fast sailing-sloops, and so destroy the Spanish trade of the Pacific. No European sail, I take it, hath gone further north.'

Indeed, the coast line at this point was dotted to show that it was conjectural; it ran straight across the Pacific, in the line of latitude 35 N., to join the coast of China.

'The storm then abating, we repaired damages, and set sail again, designing to shape our course southward, with the view of getting

once more into the enemy's course. That night, I remember, the light of Saint Elmo showed upon the foretop, at which we greatly rejoiced, as a certain sign and promise of fair weather, and every man saluted it mannerly as they use in the Mediterranean. On the sixth day after the storm, we sighted an island not laid down on any chart; but we touched not at it. Three days later, the sea having been as smooth as the Pool of the Thames, we made land again. This time it was the island of Donna Maria Laxara, so called after a Spanish lady, who here leaped overboard and drowned herself for love. But mark the ways of Providence! If it had not been for that tempest, which drove us off our course—what happened afterwards never would have happened.'

'What did happen?'

'A strange thing. The strangest thing that ever you heard of. If you want to be rich, Jack, my lad, I will some day teach you how; and that in the easiest way you can imagine. If I live—alas!'

'What way? Tell me now.'

But Mr. Brinjes would tell no more. He continued gazing at the chart, and following an imaginary course with his forefinger, as if he loved the recollection of that voyage, even though the end of it had been disastrous. Then he pushed it from him with a sigh.

'Forty years ago, it was, boys. Forty years ago.'

It was in this way, among others, that Jack acquired the knowledge of geography and the thirst which continually grew greater for voyaging among the strange and unknown parts of the habitable world. In the end, as you shall near, no one went farther afield or had more adventures.

CHAPTER II.

HOW JACK CAME TO DEPTFORD.

OF these two boys, one—namely, Jack Easterbrook—was not a native born of Deptford, but of Gosport. And since it is his history that has to be related, it is well that the manner of his coming, and the nature of his early life, should be first set forth.

On a certain warm summer afternoon, in the year of grace seventeen hundred and forty-four, when I, who write this history, was but a child of seven, and Castilla six (we are now nearing three score years, and on the downward slope of life), there sat beneath the shade of a great walnut-tree, on a smooth bowling-green, two gentlemen and a lady; the former on a rustic bench of twisted and misshapen branches, or roots, and the latter in an elbow-

chair. The lady, who had a small lace cap on her head and wore a laced apron, held a book in her hands; but the hands and book lay in her lap, and her eyes were closed. The two gentlemen were taking an afternoon pipe of tobacco. One of them—this was Rear-Admiral Sayer—was at this time some fifty-five years of age. He wore a blue coat with gold buttons, but it was without the famous white facings which His Majesty King George the Second afterwards commanded for the uniform of his naval officers; his right leg had been lost in action, and was replaced by a wooden leg, now stuck out straight before him, as he sat on the bench. He had also lost his left arm, and one sleeve of his coat was empty. He wore a full wig of George the First's time; his face was full, his cheeks red, and his eyebrows thick and fierce, yet his eyes were kindly. There was a scar across his forehead, which a Moorish scimitar had laid bare.

His companion wore the wig and cassock of a clergyman; he was, in fact, the Vicar of St. Paul's, Deptford. At the back of the bowling-

green stood the house—of modern erection—with a pediment of stone, and pilasters, and a stone porch, very fine; on either side of the house was the garden, filled with fruit-trees and beds for vegetables. The garden was surrounded by a brick wall, older than the house, covered with lichen, stonecrop, wall-pellitory, yellow wallflowers and long grasses. The house and garden were protected by great iron gates, within which marched, all day long, an old negro in the Admiral's livery, and wearing a cockade, armed with a cutlass. A small carronade stood beside the gates, for the purpose of announcing sunrise and sunset; and there was a mast, with standing gear and yards complete, at the head of which floated the Union Jack. Two children were playing with the bowls on the grass; and in a chair, so placed that the hot sunshine could fall with the greatest effect upon her face, there sat a negress, already old, a red cotton handkerchief twisted round her head, and in her lap lay some knitting. But Philadelphy, like her mistress, was sound asleep.

It was a sleepy afternoon. The drones and the bumble-bees—'dumbledores,' we called them—buzzed lazily about the flowers; the doves cooed sleepily from the dovecot; there was a hen not far off which expressed her satisfaction with the weather, and her brood, by a continual and comfortable 'took—took—took'; the great dog lay asleep at the Admiral's foot, the cat was asleep beside it; from the trees there came, now and then, the contented note of a blackbird; and the flag at the mast, which was rigged within the iron gates, hung in folds, flapping lazily in the light air. The two children played, for the most part, in silence, or else in whispers, so as not to awaken Philadelphy. The two gentlemen smoked their tobacco in silence—it was not a day for talking; besides, they saw each other nearly every day, and therefore each knew the other's sentiments, and there was no room for discussion.

Suddenly, there were heard footsteps outside, and, just as one awakes out of a dream, so all started and became instantly wide-awake.

Madame took up her book, the Admiral straightened his back, the Vicar knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and the children ran to the gates which Cudjo, the negro, threw wide open, a grin of welcome on his lips. Then there appeared a boy, dressed in a blue coat, not made for him; and too long in the sleeves, worn and shabby, dusty with travel, with brass buttons; his knitted stockings were torn, showing his bare legs; he wore a common speckled shirt like the watermen's children; on his head was a little three-cornered hat, cocked in nautical fashion. He strutted proudly across the grass, regardless of his rags, with as much importance as if he had been a full-blown Midshipman. For my own part, I have never lost, to this day, the sense of his superiority to myself and the rest of mankind. Castilla makes the same confession. Like myself, she owns that, child as she then was, she felt her inferiority to a boy so masterful. He was at this time, and always, a singularly handsome boy—tall and big for his age, his head thrown back, his brown eyes full of fire, and his hand

at all times ready to become a fist. His hair was long, and lay in curls, and untied, upon his shoulders. After him walked the negro who had brought him from Gosport, and now carried on his shoulder a box containing all the boy's worldly goods. They consisted of a toy-ship, carved for him by some sailor at Gosport; a pistol which had been his father's; his mother's Bible, a Church prayer-book, and a knife. This was all the inheritance of the poor boy. As the servant bore this precious box through the gates, he knocked the corner against the rails.

'Steady,' said the boy, turning sharply round, 'steady with the kit, ye lubber!'

The First Lieutenant himself could not have admonished a man more haughtily. Then he halted, and took a leisurely observation of the scene. Presently he espied the Admiral, and, recognising in his appearance and dress something nautical—it would have been difficult to mistake the Admiral for anything but a sailor—Jack stepped across the lawn, lugged off his hat with a duck and a bend, and said,

'Come aboard, Sir. With submission and dutiful respect, Admiral.'

The Admiral laid down his pipe and leaned forward, hand on knee, his wooden leg sticking out before him.

'So,' he said, 'this looks like the son of my old friend. What is thy name, child?'

'Jack Easterbrook, Sir.'

'The son of my old shipmate?'

'The same, Sir.'

'Parson,' said the Admiral, 'forty-five years ago I was just such a little shaver as this, and so was his father. Hang me, if the boy isn't a sailor already. Thy father, boy, was carried off by a sunstroke, while his ship was lying in Kingston Harbour.'

'Yes, Sir.'

'In command of His Majesty's frigate, "Racehorse," forty-four.'

'The same, Sir.'

'And thy mother, poor soul! is dead and gone too.'

'Yes, Sir,' said the boy, looking for a moment as if he would cry. But it passed.

The Admiral took his stick, and rose from his chair.

'Let us,' he said, gravely, 'overhaul the boy a bit. Thy father, Jack, was the best officer in His Majesty's service—the very best officer, whether for navigation or for fighting, which is the reason why they kept him back, and promoted the reptiles who crawl up the back-stairs. He was with me when I planted the Union Jack on the island of Tobago. Look me in the face, sirrah—so. A tall and proper lad. A brave and gallant lad. What shall we make of him?'

Jack's face became a lively crimson at this question. We were now all gathered round him—Castilla looking shyly, and with admiring eyes; and I, for my own part, thinking that here was the finest and bravest boy I had ever set eyes on.

'Well, now,' said the Admiral, holding the boy's chin in his hand, and looking at him steadily, 'I warrant, Parson, this boy will be all for book-learning, and we must make him a scholar, eh? Then, some day, he shall rise to

be a Reverend Doctor of Divinity, a Dean, or even a Bishop in lawn sleeves. What sayest thou, Jack?' Here the Admiral took his hand from the boy's chin, shut one eye, and looked mighty cunning.

Jack shook his head dolefully, and then laughed, looking up as if he knew very well that this was a joke.

'Well, well, there are other things. We can make thee a compounder of boluses, and so thou shalt ride in a coach and wear a great wig, and call thyself physician. 'Tis a fine trade, and a fat, when fevers are abroad.'

But Jack again shook his head, and laughed. This was a really fine joke, one that can be carried on a long time.

'He will not be a physician. The boy is hard to please. Well, he can, if he likes, become a lawyer, and wear a black gown, and argue a poor fellow to the gallows. Of such they make Lord Chancellors. At sea their name is Shark.'

'No, Sir,' said Jack with decision, because every joke hath its due limits. 'No, Sir, I

thank you. With submission, Sir, I cannot be a lawyer.'

'Here is a boy for you. One would think he was too good for this world. Perhaps he would like to wear His Majesty's scarlet, and follow the drum and fife, and fight the King's enemies on land. It is as great an honour to bear the King's commission by land as by sea. It is a good service, too, when wars are going: though in times of peace there is too much disbanding by half. But a lad might do worse. Think of it, Jack!'

'Oh! Sir,' said Jack, colouring again, 'I would not be a soldier.'

'Then, Jack, Jack, do thy looks belie thee? What? Would'st not surely choose to be a sneakin' snivelling quill-driver in a merchant's office?'

'No, Sir; I would rather starve! Sir,' said Jack, his eyes flashing, 'I would be a sailor, if only before the mast!'

'Why, there!' cried the Admiral, laying his hand on the boy's head. 'What else could the boy be? He is salt all through. Hark ye,

my lad: do thy duty and thou shalt be a sailor, as thy father was before thee. Ay, and shalt stand in good time upon thy own quarter-deck and carry thy ship into action, as bravely as thy father, or even good old Benbow himself.'

Thus came Jack to Deptford, being then nine years of age.

Some things there are—I mean not travellers' tales of one-legged men, and such as have their heads between their shoulders, and griffins and such monsters; but things which happen among ourselves and in our midst, which are so strange that the narration of them must be supported by whatever character of truth, honesty, and soberness of mind may be possessed by the narrator, and those who pretend to have been eye-witnesses. As regards the history which follows it is proper to explain that there is, besides myself, only one other person who knows all the particulars. Mr. Brinjes, it is true, knew them; but he has gone away long since, and must now, I think, certainly be dead. The Admiral, before his death, was

told the truth, which greatly comforted him in his last moments; and I thought it right to tell all I knew to my father, who was much moved by the strangeness of the circumstances, and quoted certain passages from Holy Writ as regards the practice of witchcraft and magic. Perhaps the man, Aaron Fletcher, knew something of the truth, but in the end he was convicted as a notorious smuggler, and sentenced to transportation to His Majesty's plantations, where he died of a calenture, being unable to endure the excessive and scorching heat of the sun, and his spirit broken by the overseer's whip. Everybody, it is true, knows how Captain Easterbrook brought his ship home and what followed. This is a matter of notoriety. There is not a man, woman, or child but can tell you the astonishing and wonderful story, the like of which has never been in the history of the British Navy. They have even made a ballad of it, very moving, which is sung in the sailors' mug-houses, not only in Deptford itself, but in Portsmouth, Woolwich, Sheerness, Chatham, and Plymouth.

But to know one fact is not to know the whole history.

As for me, who design to write the truth concerning this strange history, it is well that you who read it should know that I take myself to be a person of reputable life and of sober judgment, and one who has the fear of God in his mind, and would not willingly give circulation to lying fables. My father, the Rev. Luke Anguish, Artium Magister, formerly of St. John's College, Cambridge, of which society he was a Fellow, was the first Vicar of St. Paul's Church, Deptford; the new church, that is, in the upper part of the town, which was completed in the year 1736. By calling, I am a painter in oil colours; not, I dare say, a Sir Joshua Reynolds or a Gainsborough, yet of no mean repute as a painter of ships. It were unworthy of me to say more than that my pictures have met with approbation from persons of rank, and that I have been honoured by the highest patronage, even by members of the House of Lords, not to speak of the Lord Mayor and Aldermen. As

for the contention of Castilla, that her husband is the finest painter of ships ever known, that may be the partiality of a jealous and tender spouse. I am contented to leave the judgment of my work to those who shall follow after me. I do not paint ships upon the ocean, because I have never yet gazed upon the ocean, and know not, except from pictures, how the sea should be painted, or a ship rolling upon the sea. My subjects are ships in harbour, ships lying off Deptford Creek, ships in dock, ships in building, ships in ordinary, ships ashore, ships in the Pool, ships sailing up and down the river, and especially with the sun in the west shining on the sails, and painting all the cordage as of gold, just as happened when Jack brought home his prize; also ships lying in an autumnal fog, and great barges sunk down to an inch of freeboard with their cargoes of hay. Nothing finer can be painted, to my mind, than the picture of such a barge lying on a still and misty day, with the sun overhead like a plate of copper, the brown sails half lowered, and the ropes hanging loose.

I suppose that the best place in the world for a boy who is about to become a sailor, as well as for one who loves to paint ships, must be Deptford, which seems to many so mean and despicable a town. Mean and despicable to Jack and to myself it would never be, because here our boyhood was spent, and here we played with Castilla; here we first learned to sit by the river-side and watch the craft go up and down, with those at anchor, and those in dock. At Deptford, where the water is never rough enough to capsize a tilt-boat, we are at the very gates of London, we can actually see the Pool; we are, in a word, on the Thames.

The Thames is not, I believe, the largest river in the world. The great Oroonoko is broader, and, I dare say, longer; the Nile is certainly a greater stream. Yet there is no other river which is so majestic by reason of its shipping and its trade. For hither come ships, laden with palm-oil and ivory, from the Guinea Coast; from Norway and Riga, with wood and tallow; from Holland, with stuffs and spices and provisions of all kind; from the

West Indies, with rum and sugar; from the East Indies with rice; from China with tea and silk; from Arabia, with coffee; from Newcastle, with coal. There is no kind of merchandise produced in the world which is not carried up the Thames to the Port of London. And there is no kind of ship or boat, built to swim in the sea, except, I suppose, the Chinese junk, the Morisco galley, or the piratical craft of the Eastern Seas, which does not lie at anchor in the Thames, somewhere between Greenwich Reach and London Bridge. East Indiamen, brigs, brigantines, schooners, yachts, sloops, galliots, tenders, colliers, hoys, barges, smacks, herring-busses, or hog-boats—all are here. And not only these, which are peaceful ships, only armed with carronades and muskets for defence against pirates, but also His Majesty's men-of-war—frigates, sloops-of-war, cutters, fire-ships, and every kind of vessel employed to beat off the enemies of the country, who would prey upon our commerce and destroy our merchantmen. On that very day when Jack came, was there not, lying off Deptford

Creek, the 'Redoubtable,' having received her stores, provisions, and ammunition, and now waiting her captain and her crew?—and I warrant the press-gang were busy at Wapping and at Ratcliffe. Beside her lay the sloop-of-war 'Venus,' and the pink 'Lively'; and, off the dock-mouth, was the 'Hector,' lying in ordinary, a broad canvas tilt or awning rigged up from stem to stern. So that those who look up and down the river from Deptford Stairs see not only the outward and visible proofs of England's trade, but also those of England's greatness. Or, again—which may be useful to the painter—one may see, not only at Deptford and at Redriff, but above the river—at Wapping, Shadwell, and Blackwall—every kind of sailor; they are mostly alike in manners and in morals, and one hopes that to sailors much is pardoned, and that from them little is expected; but they differ in their speech and in their dress. There is the phlegmatic Hollander, never without his pipe; the mild Norwegian; the fiery Spaniard, ready with his dagger; the fierce Itaian equally ready with his knife; the

treacherous Greek; and the Frenchman. But the last we generally see—since it is our lot to be often at war with his nation—as a prisoner, when he comes to us half-starved, ragged, and in very evil plight. Yet, give these poor French prisoners only warmth, light, and food, and they will turn out to be most light-hearted and merry blades, always cheerful and ready to talk, sing, and dance, and always making ingenious things with a knife and a piece of wood. Perhaps, if we knew this people better, and they knew us better, we should be less ready to go to war with each other.

Those who live in such a town as Deptford, and continually witness this procession of ships, cannot choose but be sensible of the greatness of the country, and must perforce talk continually with each other of foreign ports and places beyond the ocean. Also because they witness the coming and going of the King's ships (some of them pretty well battered on their return, I promise you); and because they hear, all day long, and never ending, save on Sunday, the sound of hammer and of saw, the

whistling of the bo's'ns and foremen, the rolling of casks, the ringing of bells, and all the noise which accompanies the building and the fitting of ships; and smell perpetually the tar and the pitch (which some love better than the smell of roses and of violets), they cannot refrain from talking continually of actions at sea, feats of bravery, and the like. All the townspeople talk of these things, and of little else. And, besides, in these years there was the more reason for this kind of conversation, because we were always at war with France and Spain; fighting, among other things, to drive the French out of America, and so to enable the ungrateful colonies to make us, shortly afterwards, follow the lead of the French. Every day there came fresh news of actions, skirmishes, captures, wrecks, burnings. The Channel and the Bay of Biscay swarmed with French privateers as thick as wasps in an orchard. There was not a lugger on the coast of Normandy but stole out of a night to pick up some English craft; every fleet of merchantmen sailed under convoy, and every sailor

looked for death or a French prison unless he would fight it out unto the end.

The people of London are strangely incurious—many there are who know nothing about the very monuments standing in their midst—and so that they can read every day the news from France and Spain, they care little about their own country. Therefore Deptford, which lies at their very gates, is as little known to them as if it were in Wales. Some, it is true, come every year on St. Luke's Day, to join the rabble at Horn Fair, landing at Rotherhithe and walking to Charlton with the procession of mad wags who carry horns on their heads to that scene of debauchery and riot; and once a year, on Trinity Monday, the Elders of the Trinity House assemble at the Great Hall behind St. Nicolas', and after business go to church, and after church dinner at the Gun Tavern on the Green. And the ships of the Royal Navy come and go at the Royal Yard almost daily. Some, again, and those fine ladies, come to Barnes Alley, where they can buy the run tea, at ten shillings a pound, of the

smugglers who swarm in that evil-smelling street. Otherwise Deptford hath few visitors. I do not say that it is a beautiful city, though, as for streets, we have the Green and Church Street; and as for monuments, until late years there were the great House and gardens of Saye's Court, now lying desolate and miserable, partly inclosed in the King's Yard and partly given over to rank weeds and puddles. Here it was that the great Peter, Czar of Muscovy, once lived. There are also the two churches of St. Nicolas and St. Paul, both stately buildings, and temples fit for worship, the latter especially, which is—like its sister churches built about the same time, of Limehouse, St. George's Ratcliffe, Bethnal Green, Hackney, St. Martin's-in-the Fields, and many others—majestic with its vast round portico of stone, and its commanding terrace. Then there are the two hospitals or almshouses, both named after the Holy Trinity, for decayed mariners and their widows. To my own mind these monuments of benevolence, which stand so thickly all round London, are fairer than the

most magnificent King's palace of which we can read. Let the Great Bashaw have as many gilded palaces as he pleases for himself and his seraglio; let our palaces be those which are worthy of a free people—namely, homes and places of refuge for the aged and deserving poor, and those who are quite spent and now past work.

I suppose there are few places richer and more fortunate than Deptford and its neighbour, Greenwich, in these foundations. At the latter place, there is the great and noble Naval Hospital, now inhabited by nearly two thousand honest veterans—they will never, be sure, be turned out of this, their stately home, until England hath lost her pride in her sailors. There is Morden College for decayed merchants; there is Norfolk, also called Trinity, College, for the poor of Greenwich, and of Dersingham, in Norfolk; and there is Queen Elizabeth's Hospital for poor women. So, at Deptford, we have those two noble foundations, both named after the Holy Trinity, one behind St. Nicolas', and the other behind St. Paul's, the latter

especially being a goodly structure, with a fair quadrangular court, a commodious hall, and gardens fitted for quiet meditation and for rest in the sunshine during the latest trembling years of life. I do not think that even Morden College itself, with its canal in front, and its stately alleys of trees; or Norfolk College, with its convenient stone terrace overlooking the river, and its spacious garden, is more beautiful than the Hospital of the Holy Trinity beside St. Paul's Church, Deptford, especially if one considers the stormy, anxious, and harassed lives to which it offers rest and repose. They have been lives spent on the sea; not in the pursuit of honour won at the cannon's mouth and by boarding-pike in fighting the King's enemies, but in the gathering of wealth for others to enjoy, none of their gains coming to themselves. The merchant captain brings home his cargo safe after perils many and hardships great; but the cargo is not for him. His owners, or those who have chartered the ship, receive the freight; it is bought with their money and sold for their profit. For the captain and the crew there is

their bare wage, and when they can work no longer, perhaps, if they are fortunate, a room in a hospital or almshouse, with the weekly dole of loaves and shillings.

The tract of land (it is not great) lying at the back of Trinity Almshouses and the Stowage, contained by the last bend of the Creek before it runs into the river, is rented by two or three market-gardeners, and laid out by them for the production of fruit and vegetables.

As these gardens lay retired and behind the houses, no one ever came to them except the gardeners themselves, who are quiet peaceful folk. About the orchards here and the beds of asparagus, peas, endive, skirrett, and the rest of the vegetables grown for the London market, lies ever an abiding sense of peace; and this, although one cannot but hear the continual hammering of the dockyard, the firing of salutes, and the yohoing and roaring of voices which all day long come up from the ships upon the river. I know not how we came to know these gardens, or to find them out. I used to wander in them with Castilla, when we were

little children, with Philadelphy for nurse; we took Jack Easterbrook to show him the place as soon as he came to us; we thought, I believe —as children love to think of anything—that the gardens were our own; though, of course, we were only there on sufferance, and because the gardeners knew we should neither destroy nor steal.

Perhaps the chief reason why we sought the place (because we had gardens of our own at home) was that, just beyond the last bend of the Creek, there stood, on the very edge of the steep bank—here twenty feet above low-water mark—an old summer-house, built of wood. It was octagonal in shape, having a pointed roof of shingle, with a gilded weathercock upon it. Three sides contained windows, all looking upon the river; another side consisted of a door; and a bench ran round the room, except on the side of the door. It had once been painted green, but the paint was now for the most part fallen off; the shingle roof was leaky and let in the rain; the weathercock was rusty, and stuck at due east; the planks of the wall

had started; the door hardly hung upon its hinges; the glass of the windows was broken;

and the whole structure was so crazy that I

wonder it kept together, and did not either tumble to pieces or slip down the steep bank into the ooze of the Creek. In this summer-house the great Czar Peter, when he was learning how to build ships in Deptford Yard, would, it was said, sometimes come to sit with his princes or heyducs, on a summer evening, to drink brandy, to look at the ships, and to meditate how best to convert his enslaved Muscovites into the likeness of free and honest English sailors. We had small respect for the memory of the Czar, but as for the old summer-house it was all our own, because no one used it except ourselves. For us it was a fortress or castle, where we could play at being besieged, the ships in the river representing the enemy's fleet. Jack would sally forth and perform prodigies of valour in bringing in provisions for the garrison. Or it was our ship, in which we sustained imaginary broadsides, and encountered shipwreck, and were cast away, Jack being captain and Castilla the passenger, while I was alternately bo's'n, first lieutenant, or cook, according to the exigencies of the situation.

But very soon Jack grew too big for these games, and left us to ourselves. Then we fell to more quiet sport. It was pleasant to watch the ships go up and down the river, and fine to see how the tide rushed up the Creek below us, making whirlpools and eddies, and setting upright the boats lying on their sides in the mud, and trying to tear down the bank on which stood our rickety palace. We seemed to know every craft, from the great East India man to the Margate hoys or the Gravesend tilt-boats, by face, so to speak, just as we knew the faces of the naval officers who walked about the town. And, thanks to Jack, we knew the history of every ship of the King's Navy which came to Deptford, and all the engagements and actions in which she had ever taken part.

Across the Creek, and as far as the woods and slopes of Greenwich, there are more gardens, so that at spring-time it was a beautiful thing to sit in the summer-house and look forth upon a great forest—it seemed nothing less to our young eyes—covered with sweet blossoms, and tender green leaves, which formed

a strange and beautiful setting for the ships in the river. I have painted this picture several times, and always with a new pleasure, so sweet and charming it is. When I began first to draw, it was in this place; but it was when Jack had ceased to play with us, because he would only have laughed at me. I drew the ships with trembling pencil, Castilla standing over me the while. The dear girl could never hold a pencil in her hand; but she could tell me if my drawings were like. Now, to draw ships that are like real ships is the most important thing of all. The time soon came when I was never without a pencil in my hand and paper to draw upon. I drew everything, just as some boys will read everything. I drew the ships and the boats, the Creek and the bridge, the sailors, the skeletons of half-built ships in the great sheds, and the girl who stood beside me.

The picture of a lad who draws while a gir' stands beside him—that might stand for the picture of my life. It is a life which has been, I thank God, free from anxiety, trouble, or

calamity. Once I painted such a picture (having Castilla and myself in my mind). I drew a youth of eighteen seated before a window, just such a window as that of the old summer-house. The window showed a merchantman, or part of a merchantman, slowly making her way up the river with wind and tide. Her fore-mast and main-mast were gone, and in their place two jury-masts rigged with a stay-sail; her bowsprit was gone, and her figure-head carried away and lost; her bulwarks were broken down. Yet she was safe, and her crew and cargo were safe, and the evening sun was upon her, so that she showed glorious in spite of her battered condition, and seemed like some poor human soul which, after many troubles, gets at last into the haven where she may lie at rest for ever. The boy in my picture was gazing upon his sketch as if comparing it with the original. Beside him stood a girl of the same age—be sure that she was a very beautiful girl, gentle and composed, full of holy thoughts—who looked down upon the lad. Thus it is always. The man considers his work, and the

woman considers the man, loving his work because she loves the worker, yet not, like the man, carried away by admiration for the work, as knowing that all man's work is perishable and transitory, and that the breath of fame is fleeting. The picture of the girl is the true portrait of Castilla as she appeared at the age of eighteen, taken from the many drawings which I made of her at that time, her hair a light brown, falling in waves artlessly upon her shoulders, and her eyes a clear deep blue, to present which, upon the canvas, would want a Reynolds or a Raphael. Alas! if Sir Joshua had painted this picture, then, indeed, would you have caught in those eyes the light of virtue and goodness, and you would have seen about that brow a divine halo, which I have always seen there, but have not the art to represent. This it was which the ancients meant when they figured their goddesses wrapt about with a cloud.

And beside our quiet lives there ran the tumultuous course of a life whose parallel I know not anywhere.

We did not, it may be supposed, stay

always in the old summer-house. As we grew older, we roamed about the country, Jack sometimes condescending to lead the way (though he would rather have spent his whole time in the Yard among the ships). There is a pleasant country lying south and east of Deptford. You may, for instance, cross the bridge over the Creek, pass the toll-gate, and so by Limekiln Lane and London Street, a pleasant road among the orchards, you will reach the town of Greenwich, with its great hospital; and, if you please to leave this unvisited, you may turn to the right, and so up the hill by Brazenface Avenue, and into the Wilderness. Beyond the Wilderness is Blackheath, a wild and desolate spot, with never a house upon it, covered with furze-bushes. Gipsies camp here, and it is said that footpads and highwaymen lurk among the caves; but we never met any. One can come home, by way of Watersplash, along the stream, which is here no longer Deptford Creek, but the Ravensbourne—a pretty brook of pure water with deep holes under trees, and babbling shallows, running

between high banks, where the primroses, in March and April, lie in thousands. The holes are full of jack, which we sometimes caught with float and hook; and here in spring we went bird-nesting, and in summer we picked the wild roses, and in autumn gathered nuts, sloes, and blackberries. Farther afield, there is Woolwich Common; or Eltham, with the ruins of King John's Palace, the walls of which still stand, and the moat may still be seen, now dry; and the King's banqueting-hall, which is used for a barn, stands stately with its Gothic windows. And if one follows up the windings of the Ravensbourne, there are presently the swelling uplands of Penge, with their hanging woods; and Norwood, Westwood Common, Sydenham Wells, and many other rural places, pleasant for those who love the haunts of singing birds and wild flowers and the babble of brooks, and remoteness from the walks of men.

But for such a boy as Jack, what are all the charms of Nature compared with the ships, and the docks, and the river? You can get

orchards everywhere, but not a seaport and a dockyard. You can find rustics, and you may meditate in woods all over the country, but you cannot talk everywhere, as you can at Deptford and Greenwich, with sailors, old and young, of the merchant service and the King's Navy. The sailors are rough of speech and rude of manners; they live in mean houses; but in every house there is something strange and wonderful brought from foreign parts. The very landsmen and those who work at mechanical trades are half sailors, though they do not wear the sailors' petticoats; for they are shipwrights, boat-builders, fitters of state-cabins, carvers who decorate figure-heads and ships' sterns, or are employed in the Victualling Yard or in the carpenters' shop, or they are ships'-painters, rope-makers, or are employed to scrape clean and caulk ships' bottoms; so that the whole town makes its living by the sea. No one speaks or thinks of anything but the sea and the things which are concerned with the sea. What, for instance, did the people of Deptford know about the conduct of the Allies

and the King's land forces during the late war? Yet they knew of every naval action that was fought, and the name of every ship engaged; and there were men of Deptford, both pressed and volunteers, with every fleet and squadron. The streets were always full of sailors; the officers of the ships in commission and fitting-out were always passing in and out of the Dockyard gates; and in sunny weather the benches by the stairs, at the Upper and Lower Water Gates, were crowded with the old fellows watching the craft go up and down, and listening to the ribald jests of the watermen, and ready to talk all day long with a certain lad of bright eyes and brave face, who was never tired of listening to them.

What with the old men of Trinity and the pensioners of Greenwich, the boy heard stories enough of the sea and the ships and those who sail therein. Some of the men were so old that they could remember Admiral Benbow and his cowardly captains. There was not a single action fought in the first half of this century but was represented among the Green-

wich pensioners, some of whom were in it, and had lost an arm, a leg, an eye, or anything else that can be shot away and leave the trunk still living. I can still see Jack standing before some old veteran, with a hook for a hand, his eye kindling, his cheek aflame, his fists clenched, his lips parted, because in imagination he saw the deck knee-deep in blood, the boarders leaping upon the enemy like tigers upon their prey, the ship capsized or sinking, the French flag struck, and because he heard the roaring of the great guns, the rattle of the muskets, the clash of cutlasses, and the groans of the wounded.

There are many other things at sea besides fighting, chasing, and boarding. Jack learned the daily life, for example, from these old fellows, with the duties and the discipline. He heard about foreign ports and strange lands: certainly, one would never be tired of visiting wild and unknown countries, where there may remain yet to be discovered strange races of men, with fruits and flowers as yet unseen and undreamed. But there are also, alas! storms

and hurricanes, wrecks in mid-ocean, with, as the almsmen could tell us, boats laden to the gunwale with sailors who have escaped the sinking ship only to be tossed helpless on the sea with never a drop of water to drink or a mouthful of biscuit to eat. Or there are those who are cast away upon some desolate rock or unknown island, where they live on sea-birds, fish, mussels, and the like, till they die or are taken off. And some are thrown upon cold and inhospitable coasts, such as that of Labrador, where the cruel cold causes their hands and feet, their noses and ears, to fall off —there was one poor wretch in the hospital thus mutilated—and where the North American Indians (the most savage and the most ruthless race in the world) take them prisoners, and torture them before slow fires. Or there are treacherous pirates, who steal aboard, murder the crew, and pillage the ship. Or there are Moors, who make slaves of honest English sailors, and constrain them to row in their galleys bare-backed, with the master or bo's'n walking above them on a kind of bridge, armed

with a whip to scourge the bare backs of those who seem to shirk their work. Or there are French prisons, where the captives are starved on thin soup and bread for all their diet. Or there is the accursed Inquisition, into whose clutches many sailors have been known to fall, and, for their endurance in the Protestant faith, have suffered the torture of the rack, and even martyrdom at the stake. And, again, there are such perils as falling overboard, fire at sea, scurvy, yellow jack, and mutiny. And there is the evil—intolerable it would be to landsmen—of the Captain's tyranny, or, which often happens, the malice, envy, or jealousy of a First Lieutenant, with endless floggings and rope's-ending all day long. And, again, there is the danger that, after showing the greatest zeal, bravery and activity in service, a man may be passed over by the favouritism which prevails in high quarters and the want of friends to help him. Is it not a dreadful and a shameful thing that there should be men grown old as lieutenants—nay, even as midshipmen—who have fought in a hundred battles and spent

their lives upon salt water, only to feel a new mortification every voyage in serving under men young enough to be their own sons?

As for myself, the talk of these old men filled me with a kind of contempt for the seaman's lot. One cannot choose but admire the intrepidity, worthy of a stoical philosopher, with which these men face, every day, possible death; yea, and exhibit the most wonderful constancy under pain, and the strangest insensibility to danger. This, I say, commands our admiration. Yet the lot of the meanest land-man seems to me easier than that of a sailor, and I would rather be a hedger and a ditcher upon a farm than even a commissioned officer aboard the finest ship that ever floated. But we landsmen know not the strength of that longing for the sea which possesses some lads, and drags them as by chains or ropes to the nearest port (thus was Jack drawn irresistibly by the hand of fate) and so aboard—and once on the ship's books there is no other way possible—and the lad becomes for life a sailor, to spend his days rolling about on a wet and

slippery deck, yet happier than if he were ashore—like unto those rovers of old, the north-country men, who could stay long in no place, but roved from port to port, landing here and there, and devouring the substance of the people, even to the southern coasts of Italy and the islands of Greece.

CHAPTER III.

HOW JACK LEARNED OF THE PENMAN.

ERE were materials enough to fire the imagination and awaken the ardour of a boy about to become a sailor. But these were not all. For at home—the Admiral's house having become this orphan's home—there was talk all day long of fighting and foreign seas and things nautical. Jack's patron or guardian had been engaged in many of the actions fought during the eleven years' war between the years 1702 and 1713. He was on board the 'Resolution,' which carried Lord Peterborough when she was intercepted by a French squadron, and was forced to run ashore in order to save her from falling into the hands of the enemy. He was in the West

Indies, and was the British Captain who planted our flag on Tobago. He was on Sir George Byng's ship, the 'Royal Anne,' in Sir Cloudesley Shovel's fleet, when that hero perished off the Scilly Isles; he was a Lieutenant on board the 'Assurance' in that gallant action with the French Commander Du Guai Trouin, of the 'Achille.' In this battle he lost his arm; his leg he lost in the capture of a Moorish corsair during the reduction of Morocco, in the year 1734. After this he retired, receiving the rank of Rear-Admiral, and settled at Deptford, then about forty-two years of age. He presently discovered that it is not good for man to live alone, and therefore took a wife, who in due time bore him a child, Castilla. His daughter, who, if anybody, ought to know, says that her father possessed in an eminent degree, and daily in his lifetime exhibited most, if not all of, the virtues which should adorn the Christian who is also an officer of high rank in His Majesty's Navy. The Christian virtues, it is sure, vary according to a man's station in life. We do not expect certain things from Princes which are indis-

pensable to those of lowly and humble lot; from an Admiral of the Fleet we do not look for meekness, patience, humility or resignation; a choleric disposition is allowed to him; the habit of applying sacred names to things profane is excused in him; and if he who has commanded a man-of-war is not to have his own way in everything, who should? As for obedience to the Commandments, it may be shown that the Admiral followed them all. Thus, for honouring his parents, he did more—he was proud of them, because they came of a good stock—and honoured himself on their account; he killed nobody save in battle, though he drubbed and belaboured his servants every day; he robbed nobody, except in an honourable way—as in taking a prize; he was envious of nothing but the Frenchman's ships; he freely forgave everybody, even those who transgressed his orders on board ship and sinned against his patience, as soon as he had soundly flogged them. To bear malice when a man had paid for his fault with three dozen was not in the Admiral's nature. And that he was of a truly

good heart and a benevolent disposition was clearly shown by his treatment of Jack Easterbrook.

There were also many others, formerly of the naval service, who were contented to spend the evening of their days in this town of Deptford, which is not on the sea, yet lives by the sea. Among them was that famous traveller, George Shelvocke the younger, who accompanied his father in the circumnavigation of the globe in the year 1720, and was never tired of relating the perils, sufferings, and adventures of that voyage, and the wonders of the South Seas: an account of the voyage hath been published for the curious. There were also Captain Mayne, who commanded the 'Worcester' in Admiral Vernon's expedition; Captain Petherick, Resident Commissioner of the Yard, who had a goodly collection of books of voyages, which he suffered Jack to borrow and to read; Mr. Peter Mostyn, formerly Cocket-writer in His Majesty's Custom House, and an ingenious, well-informed gentleman; Lieutenant Hepworth, late of General Powlett's Marines; and

Mr. Underhill, retired purser of the King's Navy.

To be a purser is to hold a thankless office: it is he who is blamed for every barrel of damaged pork and for every box of weevily biscuit: he can please none; wherefore it is best for him not to try. As for the pleasures of a purser's life, I know not what they are. He must face the dangers of the deep with the rest; he must endure tempest and shipwreck; cannon-ball and grape-shot spare the purser no more than the first lieutenant, if he be on deck: and when the ship is cast away the purser drowns with the captain. Yet for all these perils he gets neither promotion nor honour. Would any man boast of having been purser, and therefore kept below in the cock-pit with the surgeons and the wounded men during the most gallant action ever fought? Yet there is one consolation for the purser. He can, and does continually, by his accounts, his purchases, his bribes, and percentages, suck so much profit out of every voyage that he is presently able to leave the service and pur-

chase a cottage, where, with a patch of garden to cultivate, perhaps a wife and children to cheer him, a few companions, a pipe of tobacco, and a glass of punch, he may forget the darkness of the orlop deck, the stink of his store-rooms, the great tallow-candle in the glass lantern, by the light of which he had to keep his accounts and inspect his stores; the rolling of the ship, the thunder of the cannon in a battle, the cries of the wounded, the crash and wreck of the great ship on a rock, or the alarm of fire; yea, and even the daily purgatory caused by the tricks of the midshipmen and the gibes of the gun-room.

These gentlemen met nearly every night at the 'Sir John Falstaff,' by the Upper Water Gate, for punch and conversation; they also came often to the Admiral's house, and were, one and all, kind to the lad who was thus brought among them, and freely talked with him; so that, being of an inquiring mind, and thus running about in the Dockyard, and talking with old officers, common sailors and pensioners, and with the help of the apothecary,

who from the first loved the boy, I think there was no part of the world, as there was no action of recent times, with which Jack was not as well acquainted as if he had been there. At the beginning he was placed under my father, who made him begin the study of the Latin language, which he could not stomach, and would never willingly look into any books, except those which are concerned with the sea, such as Captain Park's 'Defensive Wars by Sea,' a very instructive work; 'The Practical Sea-Gunner's Companion,' 'Gordon's Geography,' and even the 'Rigging Tables,' over which he would pore contentedly for hours. He was also fond of reading voyages, and especially those volumes of Harris's and Purchas's collections—the first of the former, and the first and fourth of the latter—which are concerned with the South Seas, towards which his imagination was greatly drawn by his conversation with Mr. Brinjes and Mr. Shelvocke. That he was always fighting other boys, especially the rough river-side lads, and was seldom without some external sign of combat, such as a black

eye, cut lip, and swollen nose, certainly did not lessen him in his patron's regard, because, when all is told, the most valuable quality in a sailor is the love of fighting.

So strong and courageous was he, so ready to fight, and so uncommonly backward in owning himself beaten, that none of his age and stature dared to contend with him—save at stone-throwing and at a distance—except one, of whom mention is here made; not because a boy's fights are matters of serious history, but because the fighting between these two, thus begun, was continued after both became men, and with consequences most important. This boy was the son of a boat-builder in the town; his name was Aaron Fletcher. In strength, age, and stature nearly the same as Jack; in bravery and spirit, equal to him. Yet, whenever they fought—which was often—Aaron was defeated, because he lacked the dexterity and quickness of eye which beat down mere strength, and render courage useless. Yet Aaron would not own to inferiority; and, whenever the boys met, they

began to snarl at each other like a pair of terriers, and the first stone was thrown, the first taunt uttered, the first blow delivered, and then, at it again, like French and English.

Further, that he neglected his Latin, went to sleep in church, put powder in the negroes' tobacco, tied ropes across the road to throw down belated wayfarers, and played a thousand pranks daily may be admitted. These things only cost him a flogging when he was found out, and endeared him more and more to his guardian.

When Jack was eleven years of age, the Admiral, regardless of my father's protestations of the perils encountered by those who are ignorant of the classics, placed him wholly in the charge of Mr. Westmoreland, who, although only a penman by trade, had acquired so great a proficiency in arithmetic, the rudiments of navigation, the taking of observations, and the working of logarithms, that he had no equal in the town, and was perfectly able to instruct a young gentleman before he went on board. In all these branches the boy showed and dis-

played an uncommon zeal and quickness. But, I verily believe, if he had thought that the study of Hebrew or Chaldean would have helped him forward in his profession, he would have entreated my father to teach him.

Mr. Westmoreland, his master, was a mild and gentle creature, who loved nothing but the study of mathematics and the art of fine writing, so that, though he wrote letters for any who came to him, and copied deeds for the attorney, and wrote out his sermon large and fair for the Vicar of St. Paul's, he always turned from these labours with joy to his books and his calculations. He was, in appearance, short and bent, with rounded shoulders, and with a hump (which made the boys call him My Lord). His voice was high and squeaky; he wore round horn spectacles; when these were off you perceived that his eyes were soft and affectionate; his forehead was high and square, and he wore a plain scratch wig. He was a patient teacher, and bore an excellent character for uprightness and piety, though he was despised by the rougher sort because,

although he was now no more than forty, or thereabouts, he could not fight, or even defend himself.

He lived next door to the apothecary, in that row of houses on the north side of the Trinity Almshouses where reside the better sort of tradesmen, such as the sexton of St. Nicolas; Mr. Skipworth, the principal barber and wigmaker, who shaved all the gentry in the place, and kept four assistants continually employed in dressing and flouring their wigs for them; the master measurer's assistant, and the master shipwright's assistant. But these honest folk did not call Mr. Brinjes their equal. He, for his part, took his pipe nightly at the 'Sir John Falstaff' with the gentlemen, while they used the 'Plume of Feathers.'

Under Mr. Westmoreland's instruction, Jack learned all that the ingenious penman had to teach him, except his fine handwriting and the beautiful flourishes with which a dexterous pen can adorn a page; and by the time he was twelve years of age he understood the use of the compass, the sextant, the ship's charts, all

the various parts of a ship and her rigging, and a great deal of geography and naval history.

As for the parts of a ship he learned them chiefly in the Yard, where he would wander among the sheds and watch the building of the ships, the repair of those in the dry dock, and the fitting out of those in the wet dock, the bending of the great beams by steam, which is made to play upon them until they become soft, the making of rope, the cutting and shaping of pulleys and blocks, the forging of anchors, and every part of the business belonging to the construction of ships. Then, again, he learned the names and purposes of all the ropes, running and standing gear, sails, flags, signals, sailing rules, and rules for action, and his natural curiosity made him inquire into, and acquaint himself with, the way in which everything is made, and may be repaired or replaced. He learned all these things from natural eagerness and interest in everything concerning a ship; but in the end this knowledge stood him in good stead, because there is

no detail in the conduct and construction of a ship which ought to be below the notice of the officers, a fact which many commanders forget, leaving the navigation of the ship to the master, her seaworthiness to the carpenter, and the health of the crew to the purser. Surely if, as hath been advanced by some, every boy is born with a clear vocation for some trade or profession, just as Paul, though an Apostle, was also a tent-maker, and Luke, at first a physician, and Peter a fisherman (afterwards of men); then, most certainly, Jack, by right divine and special calling of Providence, was a sailor.

While he sat every morning at work with his mild instructor, Mr. Westmoreland, there was always present a little girl, three years younger than himself, a child with black hair, rosy cheeks, and big black eyes. When it was winter weather this child sat in a little chair beside the fire; when it was warm and sunny, she sat in the open doorway. She was a grave child, who seldom played with other children; she had no dolls or toys; she took great pleasure

in household things, and from a very early age was her father's housekeeper; when she grew older she became his ruler as well, ordering things as seemed her best. And though her father was so fond of books and learning, this girl would never so much as learn to read. One does not, to be sure, expect girls in her station to acquire the arts of reading and writing, if only because they have no books, and never have occasion to write. These arts would be as useless to them as the knowledge of riding or dancing the minuet. But it was strange that Bess should be so different in disposition as well as in appearance to her father; and stranger still, that so rickety a man should be the father of so strong and stout a girl. As for her mother, no one knew whither she had gone, or what had become of her; it was said by those who remembered her that she was as comely as her daughter, but a termagant and a shrew in temper, who led her mild husband a terrible life, even sometimes taking the broomstick to him, and beating him over the head with it, poor man!—or laying about her with

the frying-pan, as ungoverned women use towards those husbands who, like Mr. Westmoreland, are afraid, or too weak of arm, to keep them in submission by the same methods. She left her husband (he bore the loss with Christian submission) a year or two after marriage, and was reported to have been afterwards seen at Ranelagh, among the ladies and gentlemen there, dressed in a hoop, all in silk and satin, patches and paint, and fan in hand—very fine, and carrying a domino, just for all the world as if a penman's wife could become a gentlewoman.

From the very first, a singular friendship existed between Jack and this girl. He brought her apples, comfits, and cakes, which Philadelphy, Castilla's black nurse, made for him; he played with her, and made her laugh; then he teased her, and made her cry; then he coaxed her into good temper again. She was a child who fell into the most violent storms of passion, which none but Jack could subdue; he took a pleasure both in exciting her wrath and appeasing it. On the other hand, he never

tried to enrage or to tease Castilla—perhaps because she was possessed of such extraordinary calmness and sweetness that it was impossible to provoke her, and it was waste of time, even for a boy who loves teasing, to practise upon one who regards it not. Bess, for her part, was one of those who would rather be teased into anger than neglected. It was pretty to see how she would sit when he was at his lessons with her father, watching him silently, and how she would follow him, when he suffered her, submissive and obedient; though there was nobody else in the world, not even her father, to whom this wilful girl would submit. There are some men to whom women willingly and joyfully submit themselves, and become their slaves with a kind of pride; but there are others to whom no woman will submit. Of the latter kind was Mr. Westmoreland, Bess's father, who was born to be ruled by his wife. Of the former, Jack was one; when he was only a boy, the sailors' wives and daughters in the street would call after him for a pretty lad, and bid him come

and be kissed; and when he was a man grown, the maids would look at him as he passed along the street, and would follow him with longing eyes. But if a woman becomes the slave of a man, she will have him to be her slave in return; for where there is great love there is also great jealousy; and also where there is great love there is also the possibility of great wrath and great revenge—as you will presently discover.

In one word, long before he went on board as a volunteer, young Jack Easterbrook was eager to feel the deck rolling under his feet, and to hear the first shot of his first action; he was also well advanced in all the knowledge of ropes and rigging that the gunner has to teach the youngsters aboard. It is further to be noted that at this early age, and before he went to sea, the boy had already acquired the settled conviction that all things which the round world contains, and the kindly earth produces, belong especially to the sailor by right divine, and were intended by Providence for his solace when ashore; that to provide for him, and for

his comfort, landsmen toil perpetually; that while he is fighting our battles for us, we are gratefully devising, contriving, making, compounding, and inventing all kinds of things for his enjoyment when he comes back to us; such, for instance, as strong wine and old rum, music and fiddles, songs and dances, tobacco and snug taverns; he is to have the best of all; for him the most beautiful women reserve their favours, and desire to win his affections before those of any landsman whatever. Young and old, man, woman, boy, and girl, we all loved the boy. There was not in Deptford or in Greenwich a more gallant lad, one more brave and resolute, nor one more handsome. For all his fortune he had but his resolution and his sword. And he went forth to conquer the world with so brave a heart and a carriage so sprightly that the men laughed only for the pleasure of looking upon him, and the women cried. I am sure that the true soldier of fortune hath always made the women cry.

At the age of eleven, also, the Admiral, by permission of the Captain, was enabled to place

the name of the boy on the books of the 'Lenox' as a volunteer, although he did not send him yet to sea, considerately holding that this age is too tender for the rough usage of boys aboard ship, though many boys are sent away so early. But, by entering him on the ship's company he secured that his rating as midshipman should begin at thirteen and his commission as lieutenant be obtained at nineteen. So that, although the boy was still working with Mr. Westmoreland, he was supposed to be cruising with Captain Holmes aboard the 'Lenox.'

CHAPTER IV.

HOW JACK FIRST WENT TO SEA.

IN the autumn of the year 1747—the last but one of the war then raging—the Admiral judged that the time was now arrived when the boy should join his ship. 'For,' he said, 'the lad is already nearly thirteen, and tall for his age; and he knows more than most youngsters have learned after twelve months at sea. He grows masterful, too, and will be all the better for the rope's-end which the gunner hath in store for him, and for the mast-head, where he will spend many pleasant hours. And as for the Captain—Dick Holmes is not one who will skulk, or suffer his crew to skulk. What better can happen for a boy than to sail with a fighting Captain?'

'Tis a brave lad, Admiral,' said my father —'twas at the club or nightly assemblage at the 'Sir John Falstaff.' 'By such stuff as this let us pray that England's fleets will always be manned. They have never heard of Selden's "Mare clausum," and know not his argument, which is, to my mind, conclusive. Nevertheless, they go forth to support those arguments by a kind of blind instinct, which I take to be in itself a clear proof of his sound reasoning.'

'I have never met any Mary Clausum,' said the Admiral, 'to my knowledge. Polly Collins, there was in my time, at Point—a black-eyed jade. But Jack is, as yet, full young to think of any Polly of them all.'

'Nay, 'tis the title of a learned work. I meant only that if England is to be Queen of the Seas, which France and Spain still dispute with us, and are likely to dispute for a long while, it is well that we have such boys, and plenty of them. There can never be too many Britons born in the world.'

'True, Doctor; especially if we go on expending them in this fashion.'

'We send forth this tender child, Sir,' continued the Vicar of St. Paul's, 'to a hard and rough life. He may be wrecked; he may be killed in action; he may lose his limbs; there are a thousand perils in his way. Yet we do not pity him, because, if his life must needs be short, it will be honourable. And he is in the hands of Providence.'

'That is true, Doctor. Though as to danger, hang me if I think he is worse off aboard ship than he would be ashore, what with sharks and lawyers, rogues and murderers, robbers and cheats, to say nothing of the women. And on board ship they cannot get at a man. And as for hardships—why, every youngster looks forward to being an Admiral at least, and to lead his squadron into a victorious engagement—and sometimes he does it, too.'

'As for me, Admiral,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'I shall bid good-bye to the lad with a vast deal of pleasure. He will go never a day too soon. Keep a lad too long and he gets stale. As for dangers, I think you are right. But there are dangers afloat which the landsman does not

know, and more dangers than the enemy's shot or a gale of wind. A boy may have a bully for first lieutenant, or a tyrant for captain.' Here his only eye flashed fire, from which one may conjecture that he had himself experienced this accident, and still cherished the memory; 'or a skinflint and a cheese-scraper for a purser.'

'Nay, nay,' said Mr. Underhill, 'the purser is for ever in fault.'

'Or a lickspittle for a Master; there are rogues and scoundrels afloat as well as ashore. Mark you, if it is bad for the midshipmen, 'tis worse for the crew; in such ships are floggings daily, and mutinous words whispered 'tween deck, with rope's-ending and continual flogging, no matter how smart a man may be; and yet they wonder why men rise sometimes and murder their officers and carry off the ship under the black flag. Pirates? Why, even if they knew that the gibbet was already built whereon they were to hang in chains till they dropped to pieces, do you think they would not have their revenge, and then a free and a merry life,

if only for a short year or two before they die?' and with that Mr. Brinjes looked about him so fiercely that for a while no one spoke.

'These words are better said ashore than afloat,' said the Admiral presently. 'I've tied up a man and given him six dozen—ay, or hanged him for mutiny, for less than that, Mr. Brinjes.'

'Very like, very like,' returned Mr. Brinjes, recovering his good temper. 'I will remember it, Admiral, if ever I ship with you. As for the boy now—this boy of ours—he will do well, and will turn out a credit to us all, Admiral. I have never known a more resolute lad or one better fitted for the work before him. I have taught him, for my own part, how the land lays as regards the wickedness of men, both ashore and afloat. He is prepared for a good deal; and so far, I think, never was a lad sent abroad better prepared. He knows as much, Doctor, not to speak boastfully, as a Roman Catholic confessor. Now, when a boy is fully acquainted with devilry, he need fear no devils, male or female.'

The ship on whose books he was borne—namely, the 'Lenox,' Captain Richard Holmes—was now refitting at Sheerness, being under orders to join the West Indian squadron of seven ships under Rear-Admiral Knowles, at Port Royal, Jamaica. A beautiful ship she was, nearly new, a third-rate, of seventy guns, though at this time she carried no more than fifty-six, and a complement of six hundred men. You shall hear, presently, with what singular good fortune the boy began his course. This good fortune continued with him unbroken until the event which I have to relate, so that, in thinking of Jack, I am reminded of that Lydian King who was told by the philosopher to count no man happy until the end. Always, in every ship, he gained the good opinion of the superior officers; always the actions in which he fought were victorious; promotion and distinction, prize-money, and escape from shot and cutlass wound—what more could a sailor desire? To be sure, there was one voyage which proved disastrous. Even here he escaped

drowning when so many perished. Besides, this was in time of peace.

It is generally believed that boys are shipped off to sea because they are too loutish and stupid for the arts by which landsmen rise. But we do not hear that such lads rise to distinction by reason of loutishness. This is not the way with those who live in a dockyard town. There the flower of the youth flock to the service, and there is no lack of volunteers, even for ordinary seamen, in time of war. There are skulkers, it is true; but they are more common at Wapping than at Deptford. As for officers, happy that boy who wears the King's uniform; envied is he among his companions. You may judge he wants but little admonition to encourage him in zeal.

'Boy,' said the Admiral, catechising the lad before he joined his ship, 'what is thy first duty?'

'Respect for superiors, Sir,' said Jack.

'Right; and the next? No argument on board. And when fighting begins don't gape about the ship to duck for any cannon-shot

that flies over head; but stand steady at quarters, eyes open, and hands ready. What? Many a chance comes of showing your mettle when least expected, as when a boarding attack is repelled, or the word is given to leap on board and at 'em. Be ever ready, yet not too forward, lest it seem a reflection upon thy betters. Wait till thy time comes; when it does come—but, by the Lord, Jack, I have no fear of thee!'

Other directions the Admiral gave the boy, which may be here omitted, the more particularly as they referred to the conduct which a boy should observe in port and on shore; and the Admiral's warnings were plain and clear, and such as may be read in the Book of Proverbs. My father also admonished the boy, particularly on the wickedness of profane swearing. Of this he was likely to hear only too much, and, indeed, his captain was reported to be one who enforced his orders with a great deal of hard swearing. My father also addressed a few words to this young sailor on the evils of immoderate drinking, too common on

land, though restricted by wholesome discipline at sea. And he instructed the boy how he should govern himself, keep his temper in control, guard his tongue, fight his shipmates no more than was necessary for self-respect and honour; and how, when the time should come when he himself was to be put in authority, he should be merciful in punishment, and err on the side of leniency, remembering that though a man's back must suffer for his sins, he should not be torn to pieces and cruelly lacerated—as is the practice on board some ships—save for the most heinous offences against order, morality, and discipline. 'The ancient Romans,' added my father, 'could, if they chose, flog a slave to death. Yet it was counted infamous to use this power. The captain of a King's ship has this power also, seeing that he may, if he so please, order a man as many as five hundred lashes—a truly dreadful punishment, under which the strongest man may succumb. Reserve this power when thou hast it, Jack. Three dozen, or even one, in the case of young sailors, may be as efficacious as six dozen: a

wholesome discipline is better served by moderation than by cruelty.'

I know not how far my father's admonitions produced good fruit. In after time Jack was ready enough to rap out a profane word; on the other hand, he was beloved by the men on account of his punishments, which were as certain after offence as the stroke of the ship's bell, but never cruel. It were to be wished some captains on land as well as at sea would remember that three dozen may be sometimes as good as six dozen! It was but yesterday that a poor fellow, a Grenadier, under sentence to be shot for desertion, had his punishment commuted, as they call it, to five hundred lashes. He appealed, and the previous sentence was confirmed; therefore he went boldly to his death, thinking it better to be shot than to be tortured by the lash until he died.

Then we all engaged upon Jack's sea-chest; and I suppose no bride ever contemplated her new furniture and house-linen with more pride and satisfaction than Jack bestowed upon his chest. It was strong and stoutly made, with a

till and two trays. It contained his uniform coat, his watch coat, a glazed hat for night watch in bad weather, two hats each with a gold loop and a cockade, his stockings, shirts (they were of the finest kind, fit for a young gentleman, with lace ruffles), his boots, handkerchief, crimson sash, and his hanger. Besides these things there were his log-books, ruled and prepared for him by Mr. Westmoreland; pens cut for him by the same hand; a quadrant, with a day and a night glass; the 'Elements of Navigation,' the 'Sailor's Vade-Mecum,' the 'Sea Gunner's Companion,' and a book on the 'Method of Computing Observations,' so that he was amply provided with his favourite reading. To these were added, by my father, a copy of the Holy Bible, with the Book of Common Prayer. These things, with a pocket compass and a tin pannikin or two, a book of songs, and a few other trifles, made up Jack's outfit.

When all was ready and the time of departure was come, the Admiral put into his hand a purse full of guineas, and told him that until

such time as he should be rated midshipman, an allowance of thirty guineas a year should be given to him. This is a liberal addition to a boy's pay, and I doubt whether any other youngster on board the 'Lenox' possessed so splendid an addition to his two pounds a month.

On the morning of his departure our young hero appeared dressed for the first time in his blue uniform coat, with the gold loop in his hat, and his hanger at his side, trying to look as if he had worn it for years, and was unconcerned about his personal appearance. He was going down to Sheerness in a tilt-boat, accompanied by two of the Admiral's negroes, to get his sea-chest aboard, and provided with a letter for the captain. We all went down to the Stairs with him—the Admiral, my father, Castilla and myself, with Philadelphy. We found, also waiting on the Stairs, Mr. Westmoreland and Bess, Mr. Brinjes, and the boy Aaron Fletcher.

'Farewell, Master Jack,' said Mr. Westmoreland, in his cracked and squeaky voice,

'farewell; I shall never have so good a pupil again. Forget not the rules for the right placing of the decimal point, and do not neglect practice in the Tables of Logarithms.'

'Good-bye,' said Jack, shaking his hand. 'I will remember. Good-bye, Bess.' He laid his arm round the girl's neck—she was now ten years of age, and as tall as Castilla, though a year younger—and kissed her on both cheeks. 'Good-bye, my girl—give me another.' He kissed her again. Bess said nothing; but the tears rolled down her cheeks, and her father drew her away to make room for his betters.

Then Jack saw Aaron, and he laughed aloud.

'Ho! ho! Aaron Fletcher. There isn't time for a fight this morning, Aaron,' he said; 'give us your hand.'

Aaron took the proffered hand, but doubtfully.

'I thought I'd come to see the start, Master Jack,' he said; 'and I wanted to say——'

'Well?' asked Jack; for the lad hesitated.

'Good bye, Bess.'

'To say when you come back—if it's next year or next ten years—I'll fight you again, for all your gold loop.'

'So you shall, Aaron—so you shall,' said Jack, with another laugh. 'That's a bargain.'

And so, with a kiss to Castilla, and a shake of the hand to me, and after receiving the blessing of the Admiral, who needed not to spoil its solemnity by a profane oath, he leaped into the boat, took the strings, and ordered the men to give way. But he looked back once, and waved his hand, crying out, 'Good-bye, Bess.' So his last thought was of the Penman's girl.

'When he comes home, Aaron,' said Bess, wiping away her tears, 'Jack shall beat you into a jelly.'

'I'll break every bone in his body for him,' said Aaron. 'Oh! I wish he would come back to-morrow. And you may be there to see, if you like.'

'I shall tell him the first thing when he comes back. What? You dare ask him to fight? You? I wonder, for my part, that a

Midshipman should dirty his fist upon your face.'

The Admiral looked after the receding boat, his red face full of affection and emotion. Beside him stood my father, in wig and cassock, as becomes a Doctor of Divinity. Mr. Brinjes, in his brown morning coat and scratch wig, looked a strange companion to them. But the watermen on the Stairs stood aside even more respectfully for him than for the Admiral. He might, indeed, knock them over the head with his gold-headed stick, but he could not, like Mr. Brinjes, scatter rheumatic pains and tooth-ache among them.

And here a singular thing happened. There is no man more free from superstitious terrors, I think, than myself. Yet I cannot but remember that while Castilla cried, and I myself should have liked nothing better than to cry, but for the unmanliness of the thing, the old witch-woman—she was nothing less—this Mandingo prophetess, whose powers were as real as those believed to belong to Mr. Brinjes—began to shiver and to shake and her

teeth to chatter. To be sure, it was a morning in December, but mild for the time of year, and the sun shining. No doubt some cold breath struck her face and made her shiver. But, to Philadelphy, everything unexpected was full of prophetic warning, could she read it aright.

'What does it mean?' she murmured. 'What in the world can it mean? I dun know what this shiver means: Mas'r Jack come home again, I think, and play mischief with some of us. There's trouble sure, for somebody—trouble and crying. Dun you be afraid, Miss Castil, ole Philadelphy know plenty words to keep off the Devil.'

She meant that she had plenty of incantations or charms by which to avert and ward off evil. I am sure there was never a witch-woman or Obeah man on the African coast or in Jamaica had more spells and secrets of magic and unholy craft than this old negress.

CHAPTER V.

MIDSHIPMAN JACK.

THUS was Jack fairly launched and started upon his profession. As regards a boy's first days at sea, they are reported by all to be the most miserable in his whole life. For the Quarters of the youngsters, volunteers and midshipmen, on a ship of the line, are beneath the lower gun-deck on what they call the cock-pit or the orlop. This is a dark and gloomy place, below the level of the water; no daylight can ever come to it, and there can be little access of pure air. Here the purser has his stores, the surgeon keeps his drugs, the bo's'n and carpenter their ropes and spare gear, so that the place smells continually of tallow, beef, pork, tar, and bilge-water. It swarms with

rats and cockroaches; in time of battle the wounded are brought here, near the after hatchway, as to the safest part of the vessel. Here the youngsters hang their hammocks and stow their chests. As for their mess, it is with the surgeon's mate, the master's mate, the purser's mate, and the captain's clerk. To boys brought up delicately, the food is coarse; new-comers have to run the gauntlet of rough jokes, and the horseplay which among these lads passes for wit: it is that kind of wit to which the only answer is by force of fist. The young sea-lions' play is always like a fight, and generally ends in one. Therefore, if a boy on board ship love not fighting, he had better tie a kedge-anchor round his neck and drop overboard. But if, like Jack, he loves and is always ready for a fight, and will engage with the first who offers, however big and strong he may be, then the society of the midshipmen's mess may become delightful to that boy; for the wish of his heart will be gratified. I believe this was Jack's case; he hath told me how for a week or two he fought every day, and how, at the termination of each

encounter, he found reason to thank Aaron Fletcher for his toughness and obstinacy, which had taught him useful lessons. Further, there are tricks to be endured, such as the stealing of a boy's breeches when he is dressing, so that he is late on deck, and is consequently mast-headed: or the greasing of his head with tallow while he is asleep; with many other nauseous jokes, all of which have to be borne with good humour until an opportunity occurs of revenge; or the little tyranny of one who, because he is a head taller, thinks he can do as he pleases; one such did Jack fight every day—getting, to be sure, the worst of it—until the big fellow had no more stomach for the fight, and left his adversary in peace. As for the gloom of his quarters, and their narrowness and discomfort—why, Jack had seen them often enough, and knew what to expect, and cared not two pins for them. As for sea-sickness, Jack never felt it. The rough sea fare he liked; and as for the daily duty and the sharp discipline, these were part of the profession, and designed for the safety and government of some hundreds of

lives and the accomplishment of the ship's purpose. If a sailor would be happy, he must, I take it, acquire, as soon as possible, the feeling of association. Everything has to be shared; if he take on board with him and nourish the desire, common to all landsmen, of getting as much comfort for himself as he can seize, he will never be easy. Comfort, I suppose, and ease of body, are served out, on board a man-o'-war, in rations and pannikins—like the rum.

Jack's good luck began, as I have mentioned, with his first voyage—that is to say, whatever good fortune can come to one so young fell to him, as you shall see.

The 'Lenox' sailed on Dec. 5, 1747, and, meeting with none of the enemy on her voyage, joined Admiral Knowles at Port Royal, in Jamaica, on Feb. 8—a short passage—the ship being a fast sailer and ably handled.

As this war took place when I was a child, coming happily to an end when I was but twelve years of age, I know little about it, save that my early recollections are all of activity

in the Yard, the going and coming of ships, the building and launching of ships, the hurry and the business of war. There were some very fine engagements at sea, I believe, of which I know only one or two—those, namely, in which Jack was engaged; and there were some memorable actions fought on land, of which that of Dettingen was one. There are in every century so many wars; there are in every war so many actions, every one of which in the eyes of those who have fought on the victorious side, and especially in the eyes of the Admiral or General, is so memorable that it will remain for ever in the history of the world as a feat of arms never to be forgotten. This vanity is like that of the poet, who thinks that for an ode to 'Fame,' or to 'Victory,' published in the 'European' or the 'Lady's Magazine,' he is covered with glory and crowned with an everlasting wreath of bays. One immortal victory is succeeded by another; one General causes his predecessor to be forgotten; one poem is followed by another; then both are suffered to repose between the leather binding

of the volumes which contain them. It is only the work of the painter which lives on the walls for all men to admire in all ages to come.

I say, then, that whatever imperishable glory surrounds the names of those who conducted for the Allies this war, I know of none except that which belongs to one squadron in the last year of the war. An account of it may be read in Mr. John Hill's 'History of the British Navy,' itself compiled from the papers of the late Honourable Captain George Berkeley, R.N., which stops short at this chapter, the book having been published at the beginning of the next war. What I know of it is taken from the description of these affairs given me by Jack himself.

The 'Lenox,' then, arrived at Port Royal on Feb. 8, 1748. The captain was heartily welcomed by Admiral Knowles, who was on the point of sailing on an expedition from which the best was hoped. By the greatest exertions, the ship was provisioned in readiness to join, and the squadron, Governor Trelawny accompanying the Admiral, left Port Royal on the 13th

with design to attack Santiago, or Saint Jago, the most important town and port of Cuba, next to Havana. The squadron was strengthened by a detachment of 240 men of the Governor's regiment. The fleet unhappily met with contrary winds, which were so long and persistent that the Admiral resolved upon changing the plan of the expedition. It was, therefore, decided to make an attack upon Port Louis, on the south side of Hispaniola. Thither, therefore, the wind being favourable, they sailed, and arrived in good order. On the 8th of March, the ships being then almost within pistol-shot of the walls, the attack was commenced; the cannonade lasted three hours, at the end of which time the enemy's guns were silenced, and the Governor proposed to capitulate. He sent an officer off with propositions, which the Admiral refused, and sent back his own, giving an hour for consideration. Before the end of that time they were accepted, and the place was taken. 'I believed,' said Jack, telling me of this, his first action, 'that every cannon-shot that struck the ship or flew through the rigging

was going to knock my head off, not thinking that, by the time I heard the noise of it, the danger was over. Yet I was resolved to stand at my quarters, and do my duty as well as I could; but for the life of me I could not help ducking my head, till the gunner spied me and found time to fetch me a clout on the head, saying, "You fool, that cannon-ball was half a mile beyond the ship before you ducked. Hold up your head, and remember that when it is knocked off, you will have no time to duck out of its way." So, with that I plucked up, and was comforted to see the men at the guns, none of them killed, and none of them ducking. So I was highly ashamed of myself till they told me afterwards that, at the first engagement, most everybody ducks. As for the Captain, he was on the quarter-deck, and scorned to show the least fear; and the men at their quarters only laughed, even when a shot struck the ship and fragments of the timbers went flying about. But it was fine to see how, one by one, we silenced the guns. Only I should like to see fighting at close

quarters. This pounding with the big guns at long range is not to my taste.'

There was some work for the boats as well; for the enemy set fire to one of their ships, and endeavoured to send her alongside the Admiral's ship; but boats were sent off, which towed her clear, and took possession of two more designed for the same purpose, though the enemy's musketry fired smartly on them all the time. Our loss in the whole action was only ten men killed, among whom were Captain Renton, of the 'Stafford,' and Captain Cust, a volunteer, with sixty wounded. The loss of the enemy was a hundred and twenty-eight killed. The fort contained seventy-eight cannon and a vast quantity of ammunition and stores, the whole of which was taken possession of and the fort blown up.

I dare say it was a small business, but it seemed a great one to the boy, who thus took part in an action for the first time.

This affair concluded, the Admiral proceeded to put into execution his design upon Saint Jago.

The attack, however, failed, because they found a chain across with two large ships and two small ones filled with combustibles and ready to be set on fire at the first attempt to break the chain. This was mortifying, and added nothing to the Admiral's reputation. But six months later, it was Jack's good fortune to take part in a spirited action with the Spanish squadron between Havana and Tortugas. It was in October, and I believe after the peace had been signed; but this they knew not. The Spanish fleet consisted of the same number of ships as our own, but larger, and with double the number of men. There was a court-martial afterwards, and the Admiral was reprimanded for not shifting his flag when his own ship was disabled. Therefore the action is not one of those in which the country can take the most pride. But this had nothing to do with a young midshipman, and no one ever denied that the 'Lenox,' for her part, was admirably fought and handled, seeing that when the 'Cornwall,' the Admiral's ship, was disabled, the 'Lenox' had to sustain the fire of

the whole of the squadron until the arrival of the 'Canterbury' and the 'Warwick.' At sundown the 'Spaniard' began to retreat, but not before their great ship the 'Conquestador' was taken. Admiral Knowles has been further reproached with not prosecuting the pursuit with greater vigour. However that may be, he fell in, two days afterwards, with the Spanish Admiral's ship, the 'Africa,' and blew her up. Whatever might have been our success it cannot, therefore, be denied that we took two out of seven ships, and compelled the rest to run away. As for Jack, he had learned now to receive the enemy's broadsides without ducking; 'but what amazed me most,' he told us, 'was that there was no shouting or crying among the men. They were all as cool as if they were firing a salute at Spithead. When a man was wounded and fell, he was carried below, so there was not much of the groaning and shrieking that landsmen talk about. Why, those fellows of ours will have a leg sawn off and never groan. Whereas, if a man is killed, you can't expect him to groan afterwards. To

be sure, I've never seen a fight with a boarding party. And I say, Luke, the first time you see a man killed, when he falls down in a heap on the deck, and his face turns quite white, and his arms and legs lying out anyway, as if he didn't care what was going to happen—it makes you feel sick and dizzy. But the men only laugh, because everyone takes his turn; and you can't escape the bullet that is bound to kill you. If it wasn't for knowing that, nobody would be able to feel happy, and work with a will, while the shots are flying about. Luke, there's another thing'—here his voice dropped to a whisper—'there's a thing I never knew before, nor suspected. There's cowardly captains, even in the King's Navy—captains who won't crowd on the canvas in pursuit, and drop out of action, pretending to be disabled. They never told me that—not even Mr. Brinjes told me. And half-hearted captains. Why, if all they say is true, we should have been inside Saint Jago, instead of sheering off after a broadside or two. But there's more brave captains than the other

sort; and so you'll see when next we have a brush.'

For the 'Lenox,' with Admiral Knowles's squadron, had now returned and the ship was paid off, and Jack had made his way home again, when you may be sure we killed the fatted calf and gave him welcome. He was gone, on that voyage, for the best part of two years, and was now fifteen years of age, and looked eighteen, being so big and strong. The sun and the wind had painted his cheeks a lively colour, his hands were brown, his speech was rough, and his bearing was manly. Wonderful it was to see the confidence and the manliness of one so young, to say nothing of the pride he took in the exploits of his ship. These, we presently discovered, lost nothing in the telling. He brought home a most beautiful necklace of red coral which had been found in the fort of Port Louis, belonging, no doubt, to one of the mulatto or half-caste women, who were both the slaves and the mistresses of the Spaniards in those parts. He showed it to me one day, and I expected he would give it to

Castilla. Fortunately, I told her nothing about it, and presently I saw it round the neck of Bess Westmoreland. It is so common at Deptford to see girls of her class decorated with gold chains, coral necklaces, jewelled brooches, and all kinds of finery (for a few days only, because they speedily send the things to London to be sold), that no one asked who had given the child an ornament so unsuitable for her position. As for Castilla and myself, if Jack before he went away was going to be a hero, he was now actually become one; we were fully persuaded that when at Port Louis the boats towed off the fire-ship with the musket-balls spattering in the water, it must have been Jack who sat in the stern; and when the 'Conquestador' surrendered it must have been in terror at the sight of this youthful conqueror, terrible with his sword in his hand; and when the 'Africa' blew up it was because the Spanish Admiral perceived that he could not hope to contend any longer with this young sea-lion; and, considering the Admiral's want of spirit, it was nothing but the presence of

Jack that saved the fleet from disaster. I began to draw pictures, representing episodes in the three actions in which our hero had taken part, such as Jack repelling boarders, laying about him with such an intrepid air as commanded terror and admiration in all who beheld it. Behind him stood the British tars, ready to back him up with cutlass, pistol, and pike. Or another, in which I displayed the two ships at close quarters, with grappling-irons, and Jack leaping singly upon the enemy's deck, a pike in one hand and a cutlass in the other; and there was Jack laying the gun that was to hit the enemy between wind and water, and so sink her: he performed the operation with thoughtful face, the captain standing by, wrapt in admiration. They were wonderful pictures. Jack laughed at them, but did not deny that, perhaps, there might be truth in the subjects. I gave them to Castilla, who put them away. She hath since assured me that she hath kept them out of regard for the hand which drew them. That is doubtless true, since she says so. But I think there

must have been, at the same time, some admiration for the hero of those designs.

I do not describe the joy with which the Admiral received the boy, nor the pleasure with which he listened to his account of the actions he had witnessed. As for the manner in which Jack sought out Mr. Brinjes, everybody knows the contempt with which the combatant branch regards the civil branch, though the surgeon's mate, by order of the Navy Office, is considered a gentleman, and messes with the midshipmen; so that there was condescension in a midshipman visiting an apothecary. Yet, as Mr. Brinjes was an old friend, Jack could not but treat him with kindliness mingled with superiority. Moreover, he had by this time himself visited the places of which Mr. Brinjes loved most to speak. He had seen the negroes of Port Royal and Spanish Town, and those of Bridgetown, Barbadoes; and of St. Kitt's; though as yet he had never seen the Guinea Coast. One is not afloat for nearly two years without learning and hearing things. So that for every tale which Mr. Brinjes had to tell, Jack

had now half a dozen. And I remarked that, like the apothecary, Jack loved to figure as the hero in his own stories. This is a temptation to which men are all liable, and especially sailors; because, I suppose, they are looked upon by the world as certain to have had adventures; and there is no man in Greenwich Hospital who has never been wrecked, or cast away, or been attacked by savages and by sharks, or had a brush with pirates.

As regards the quality of these stories and the art of making and telling them, if there is any art in so simple a thing as the telling of a sailor's yarn, it must be owned that the apothecary showed himself the superior. For it is required of such a tale that there must be fighting in it, with much bloodshed, narrow escapes, starvation in boats, pirates, and desert islands. All of these were supplied by Mr. Brinjes, whereas poor Jack had as yet nothing but his three battles. Bess, you may be sure, came to sit with us in the room behind the shop, and to hear Jack talk. She sat in the window-seat, her hands folded in her lap, gazing

at her hero all the time, and speaking not a word save when Mr. Brinjes or I ventured to interrupt the flow of Jack's manly conversation.

Two days after Jack returned, the promised fight with Aaron Fletcher came off in my presence, and that of Bess, who, I believe, was the chief instigator of the combat—having a vehement desire to see Aaron punished for certain disrespectful words spoken in Jack's absence.

He was a little older than his adversary, and now bigger of frame, and as hard as was to be expected of a young man who spent his days and nights chiefly in a fishing-smack—he called it a fishing-smack—between Ramsgate, or Leigh in Essex, and the coast of Holland or of France.

They fought in the gardens behind the Stowage. It is beneath the dignity of history to describe an encounter with fists between two boys. Sufficient it is to say that Jack took off his coat laughing, and the other scowling; that they fought for an hour, with some vicissitudes

—Aaron, so to speak, carrying heavier metal, but Jack handling his guns with more dexterity; that Bess stood by, clapping her hands when Jack's fist went home, and taunting Aaron when he fell—which made both combatants the fiercer; that, finally, Aaron was disabled, and had to retire from the conflict by the dislocation of a finger, which gave Jack the victory. But both were so mauled and bruised, their faces so covered with blood and swollen, that the battle must have ended in neither being able to see.

'I'll fight you again—and again after that,' said Aaron, mopping his face, with dark and savage looks.

What did they fight for? Well: one was a gentleman, and the other a mechanic; one was a midshipman in the King's service, and the other was a smuggler. Surely, these things were enough. If you want more, remember that even at sixteen a youngster may fall in love and be jealous. Aaron was already in love with the black eyes of Bess, who was now

nearly twelve, but like a Spanish girl in this respect, that at twelve she might have passed for fifteen at least. And Bess, who would have none of him, thought of nobody but our handsome Jack.

CHAPTER VI.

THE 'COUNTESS OF DORSET.'

WITH the return of the fleets, and the signing of the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, came a great reduction of the Naval Estimates which, in the year 1750, provided for no more than ten thousand men, instead of fifty thousand. This step, although it returned thousands of men to the merchant service, the coast service, the colliers, the fishing trade, and the river, sent back more than were wanted, so there was great distress with men out of work all round the coast, and a large increase of smuggling. Many regiments of marines were disbanded at the same time, and so men who, having been long engaged in active service, had lost the arts of peace and forgotten their former trades, were

thrown upon the country seeking employment, and, for the most part, finding none. Again, from the dockyards were dismissed an immense number of artificers, such as skilled shipwrights, carpenters, figurehead-carvers, painters, decorators, and the like, besides a host of unskilled labourers, who had been receiving good wages, and now found themselves without work and for the most part without money. Add to this that the trade of those who get their living out of the ships and the sailors, and by navy contracts, was suddenly shrunk into nothing, like a bladder which is pricked, and you will understand why, though the country breathed and the merchants of London and Bristol rejoiced, the seaports and dockyard towns groaned and lamented. As for the shipwrights, there is always employment for some in one or other of the private building-yards—such as Pett's or Taylor's, or in the repairing-docks, as the Acorn and the Lavender; but what are these even when working their utmost compared with the King's yards and their continual demand in time of war? It is true that a large number

of disbanded soldiers, marines, and artificers received grants of land in Nova Scotia, and were transported thither. But there are never many in proportion to the whole number who can suddenly become farmers, and who fear not the cold of that inhospitable place. As for the unfortunate sailors, there were, to be sure, always new hands wanted for the merchant ships; but a man cannot look to get a berth as soon as he desires; and other work they can do none. No one ever heard of a sailor following the plough, or becoming a shoemaker, or working in a carpenter's shop. It seems as if keeping the watch, bending the sails, and working the guns, make a man unfit for other kinds of work. The disbanded soldier may turn his hand to anything, but not the sailor. So that when his pay and prize-money are all spent—which never takes the honest fellow long, so ready is the assistance of his friends—he has nothing to do but to lean against the posts, or to stand about the riverside, waiting for a chance. Often for a lodging he is reduced to sleeping on the bulks in the open street, and,

for his food, to take whatever may be given him by the charity of his fellows. And, at last, when this fails, if he cannot ship even on a hoy or a hay-barge, what wonder if he takes to running a fishing-smack over to France for brandy? And then one hears of a desperate affray with the King's officers on the Sussex coast; and these are the times when the roads become infested with footpads—men driven desperate by poverty, who might have remained honest fellows had they been kept to their colours, or to their ships; and in the houses of Deptford, where there had been plenty, and the laughter of little children, were now crying women and hungry babes, with the dreadful temptations of poverty and hunger. I am sure there is no more terrible temptation than this; let us never cease, rich and poor together, to pray in the words commanded, 'Give us this day our daily bread.'

There are some who think that the custom of disbanding the troops and paying off the men is an evil one, because, they argue, first, if you would secure peace be prepared for war,

as is shown in lively fashion by the fable of Æsop; and if you are always ready to fight, the enemy will be less ready to give provocation; and, next, a better plan, if the forces must be reduced, would be to diminish them gradually, by suffering those to go who wished, and enlisting no more, so that speedily, and without injustice, an establishment on a peace footing could be secured. But in the Navy Office prudent counsels have never yet prevailed (I say this not of my own wisdom, but from general consent of those who have had opportunity of studying things naval), and I suppose will not, until some great calamity befall our country, and makes us call for neither Whig nor Tory, but for those who desire the greatness and the prosperity of these islands.

Sad, indeed, was the case of the younger officers—the midshipmen, like Jack—who had little interest, and now feared that they might never become lieutenants. The more choking it was, because everybody had been looking for a long war, with plenty of prize-money and quick promotion. And now, in the estimation

of many, not only was peace signed, but it was assured and would be lasting; because, these sagacious politicians of the coffee-house asked, why should France wish to make war again, having received not only so severe a lesson, but also terms of peace far more honourable than she could have expected? The events of the next few years have shown very plainly how anxious France has been to keep her word and to maintain peace. Perhaps, now that we have at last happily turned her out of Canada and the East Indies, and reduced her power in the West Indies, her turbulence may abate for a time. But one knows not; we are nearing the end of the eighteenth century, and we cannot tell what may happen before that end arrives. However, the merchant adventurer naturally desires peace, and therefore is ready to prophesy that peace will be lasting, because we are always glad to believe what we desire. I have heard that the activity of the French yards was never relaxed during these years of peace; certainly, they never commenced any war with more magnificent fleets than those

which they sent to sea a few years later in the year 1756.

As for Jack, after being ashore for two or three months, and finding no prospect of employment, he began to hang his head, and to be despondent, longing to be afloat again, and seeing no chance. In truth, there was little in a landsman's life that he cared for, being, at this period, not much better than a sea cub, a species of animal little loved by any except those who know that he will grow into a lion. That is to say, he took no joy in reading, unless it was the description of a sea action—always, to my thinking, tedious to read. Jack, who did not think so, used to illustrate the history with the aid of walnuts placed in position, and showing, to his imagination, better than any drawing, how the fight was conducted. The gentle arts of poetry, music, painting, and dancing had no charms for him. He liked not the society of ladies, old or young, nor the polite conversation which pleases them; and as yet he had not felt the passion of love. I believe he was set against the sex by Mr. Brinjes, who

loved no woman except such as had a black and shining skin, and lived somewhere about Old Calabar. As for Bess, she was the most congenial companion to him at this time, because she never tired of listening to his talk about the sea, and what he was going to do. But as for love, he had none for her at this time. Of this I am assured.

Everybody has heard of the 'Countess of Dorset'; how she set sail in order to navigate the great Pacific Ocean and never returned, and how for many years nothing was known of her fate any more than is known of the fate of Sir Cloudesley Shovel. It is matter for regret that the single officer who was saved out of that wreck and survived the incredible sufferings which followed should not have been able to narrate in lively and moving fashion the particulars of this grievous disaster. Surely, a history as instructive as that of Commodore Anson might be made of this voyage. But now, I suppose, it will never be written.

Soon after the peace, the 'Countess of

Dorset,' which was lying up in ordinary, was fitted out in Deptford Yard. She carried an armament of forty-four guns, and was a frigate well reported as a sailer and for behaving well in heavy weather; ships being, as is well known, capricious in this respect; so that you may construct two vessels of exactly the same measurements, on the same lines, and yet, while one is easily handled and is obedient to her helm, the other shall be lubberly and difficult to steer; and one shall sail fast and the other slow: so that when any vessel is launched, it is impossible to tell beforehand what she will be like, and one cannot judge by the behaviour of a sister-ship. As for her destination, it was as yet unknown; but some thought she was to form part of the Jamaica fleet.

One afternoon, however, the Admiral called Jack, and held a serious conversation with him.

'Thou art now, my lad,' he said, 'truly becalmed, and in the Doldrums; or, worse still, in a leeward tide, and drifting on the rocks. In a word, if a berth be not found

before long, thou may'st give up all further hopes of the King's Navy. I am sorry for thee, lad. There is John Company, to be sure —they have a hundred vessels, they say—but their commanders are fond of their ease; and, besides, without interest in the India House, how can one hope for promotion? It would grieve me to see thee mate of a merchantman. Yet, what help?'

'I can ship as an able seaman, Sir, as soon as I am old enough.'

'Ay, ay! But we must hope for something better. Listen, my boy. I have this morning conversed with the Commissioner of the Yard, Captain Petherick, who has imparted to me a secret. The 'Countess of Dorset' is bound for a cruise in the Southern Seas. I have therefore sent an application in thy name to the Navy Office. Because, Jack, though it is not the service I could have wished for thee, yet, seeing that there is little chance of anything better, we must e'en make the best of it, and if we get thee billeted on her as midshipman we shall be fortunate. The voyage will be long

and tedious. There will be no fighting, unless —which I doubt—the captain judges it well to seek out and capture the Manila galleon. They say there are islands out there filled with black pirates and cannibals; but I never heard of any honour to be obtained in fighting these poor devils. When you have gotten across the Pacific Ocean, there may be engagements with Chinese and Malay fellows. They have stink-pots and poisoned arrows. You will have to fight them at close quarters with pike and cutlass and boiling pitch, as well as with guns. But where is the glory of such an action compared with an engagement, yard-arm to yard-arm, with a Frenchman or a Spaniard of equal weight?'

'I should like to go, Sir,' said Jack, his eyes kindling.

'The Lord knows,' continued the Admiral, 'when you would come back again! And meantime, while you and your company were cruising in unknown waters, another war might break out, and you would lose your chance, which, indeed, would be the Devil.'

'But if no war break out, then my chance may be lost the other way.'

'It would so, Jack. Perhaps we might get thee a berth—but of midshipmen there are plenty, and of ships in commission there are few. Yet the Commissioner tells me they have secret intelligence that the French are busy in Toulon and Rochelle. What doth this mean if peace is to continue? And complaints have been received from New England of infractions by the French. Is this a sign of peace? However, we know not. The King grows old; the young Prince is reported to be of a pacific disposition—but talking is vain.'

Briefly, the Admiral's application proved successful. Jack was appointed to the 'Countess of Dorset.'

When Mr. Brinjes heard of this appointment and the sailing orders of the ship, he showed a strange emotion.

'What?' he asked. 'Thou, too, art going to the South Seas, Jack? Why, it may be that the ship—but I know not—'tis unlikely, or—which I doubt. Thou art young yet, Jack;

but if I tell thee my secret, though without imparting, yet, the latitude and longitude, while in those seas, thinking of what I shall tell thee, and mindful of the future, thou mayest take observations, and when the ship comes home we will talk further of the matter. For look ye, my boy, I am sure that I shall not die before I have seen again that place—but wait until I have told thee. What? You think I am but a poor apothecary, admitted to sit among gentlemen because I can cure their gout for them, and feared by the common sort because I can bring rheumatism upon them? You shall see. You think I have nothing but the few guineas in my till. Why, then, listen, and keep the secret for me; though if all the world knew, no one would be one whit the for'arder. Yet keep the secret; and now, boy, reach me down the chart.'

CHAPTER VII.

MR. BRINJES CONCLUDES THE STORY OF HIS VOYAGE.

HOSE who will read this history through, and then consider the various parts of it, will not fail to be amazed with the manner in which Jack was prepared for the fulfilment of his fate and for the close of his life (if that hath yet happened) by a crowd of circumstances which seem to have indicated it and led him irresistibly. For, first, it was permitted to him—a rare thing—to make the acquaintance of two who had voyaged upon the South Seas—I mean as officers, and of the better sort; for of those who had set foot on Juan Fernandez, fought the Creolian Spaniards at Payta, Guayaquil, and Panama, and insulted their settlements

in the Philippine Islands, there were many in Greenwich Hospital and the Trinity Almshouses of Deptford. Of these two, one, the apothecary, would relate his adventures in a moving manner, so as to make a boy's cheek burn and his pulses beat. The other, it is true, was a phlegmatic man, but there were parts even of his narrative—as, for example, when the castaways built a crazy boat, thirty feet long, and put to sea only forty strong, yet resolved to attack the first Spanish vessel they sighted, though they had but three cutlasses and half a dozen muskets and a small cannon, for which there was no stand, so that it had to be fired from the deck; and for all their provisions nothing but stinking conger-eel, dried in the sun, and one cask of water, fitted with a musket-barrel, by which each man drank in turn—I say that there were parts of his narrative which would fire the boy, and make his eyes bright. For the hearing of such sufferings only stimulates a boy who is intended by nature for a sailor. Next, there were the books lent to him by Captain Petherick, all of voyages,

especially in Oceanus Australis, and Magellanica. And, thirdly, he was, while yet a boy, to sail across the great Pacific Ocean, which is said to fill those who have once voyaged on its waters with a strange love and desire to return thither, if only to meet with shipwreck and starvation. What follows, however, was the story which Mr. Brinjes now completed—a strange story, truly.

'I told you,' he began, 'that we were driven off our course north of the latitude in which we hoped to sight the great Manila ship. She carried I know not how many cannon, and I know not how many hundreds of men. But we were a hundred and twenty strong, all well-armed resolute men; and they were Creolian Spaniards, a cowardly crew, who when they have fired their small-arms can do no more, and when the English lads board the craft fall to bawling for Quarter, and strike their flag. There is but one rule in these waters: it is to attack the Spanish flag whenever you find it, and to look for no resistance once you come to close quarters, unless the officers, which some-

times happens, are French; then they will fight. Now mark what happened to us. The same tempest which drove us so far north caught the Manila ship as well, of which we were in search, and drove her also out of her course, treating her even more roughly than ourselves. We sighted her one morning at daybreak. There could be no doubt about her; there are not many ships of her build in the North Pacific. As soon as we were near enough to make her out all hands were called to quarters, and we prepared for action with joyful hearts —loading the guns and small-arms, and sharpening cutlasses and pikes. As we drew nearer, and the daylight stronger, the sea being now quite smooth, save for a gentle swell, we perceived a strange thing—namely, that her mainmast and her foremast were gone by the board, only her mizen standing; her bows and bulwarks were stove in, and her rudder was lost. She was drifting about upon the water, helpless as a log. She had no sails set; most of her rigging was cut away. We fired a shot by way of signal, but received no reply; then we

drew nearer. Not a man could be seen. Were they all hiding down below, or were they hatching some treachery? We ranged presently alongside, cautiously standing to our guns, and expecting nothing less than a broadside. But the guns, on the upper-deck, at least, were not manned; nor was there a soul to be seen, or the least sign of life. However, our boarding party leaped aboard, with a shout, expecting some trick of the enemy. Boys, there was not a man left in all that great ship. How they got off—by what boats, or on what raft—I know not, nor did I ever learn. She was deserted; she was floating about these lonely seas, a great treasure-ship, with all her treasure still on board! Why, she was not ours by right of conquest; she was ours by the law of the sea, because she was a derelict. We were pirates, if you please, or rovers, or adventurers. Whatever we were, that ship was our own because we picked her up.'

'What!' cried Jack, 'no fighting?'

'None, my lad. On that voyage there was no fighting with the Spaniards from beginning

to end. As for this great inheritance, into which we came without a question or a blow, 'twas all left undisturbed on board with the precious cargo of which it formed a part. Strange it was to walk 'tween decks, and see them filled with the bales of silks, the spices, the rich stuffs, that the galleon was carrying to Acapulco. There was also a beautiful collection of small-arms, and swords with jewelled hilts, pistols with carved stocks, brass carronades, and such carved work in wood, for the state-rooms and the captain's cabin, as one could sell in London for its weight in silver, at least. There was also a great quantity of wine, which was seasonable, for our spirits were well-nigh drunk out, and there was no probability of our getting more. We took all the wine and the arms, and as much of the silks and embroidered stuff as every man pleased; so that we went about as fine as so many princes, with purple and crimson sashes. The spices we mostly left on the ship; but the powder we took out of her, and all her provisions. And then we

found the treasure. It was packed in small iron-bound chests, in gold pieces-of-eight and other coins, worth, as near as I could calculate, judging from the weight, about two hundred and fifty thousand pounds of our money. Think of two hundred and fifty thousand pounds, to be divided among a crew of simple rovers! When we first found this treasure, and understood how much it was worth—namely, allowing eight shares for the Captain, and eighteen for the officers, nearly two thousand pounds apiece for every man, we were amazed at our wonderful fortune, and looked at each other like stuck pigs. However, we got the boxes on board, and laid them safe in the Captain's cabin, and set fire to the galleon, which blazed furiously, and presently blew up, and so an end of her. And as for us, we sailed away, and began to feast and to drink, and to make merry. And for the first few hours, I think there was never so happy a crew in the world.'

'Well,' said Jack, 'if prize-money were all

they wanted. But to have no fighting with the Spaniards—why, one would as lieve take the money out of a till.'

'There was a great deal of fighting. I said only that there was no fighting with the Spaniard.'

'What other fight was there, then?'

'That evening we made a great feast on deck, all the ship's company sitting down together to as noble a salmagundy, onions being still plentiful, as one would wish to see. And with the salmagundy—which is sailor's food, truly, yet I want no other as long as I live, unless it be lobscouse and sea-pie—we drank the finest wine, designed for His Excellency the Governor-General of the Manilas, that was ever drawn from cask. Such wine one may never hope to taste again. What? Topers who drink strong black port and Jamaica rum (which yet I love), what know they of the soft and luscious drink which these Papistical Spaniards enjoy daily, sitting in their cool and shady houses, while the negroes and the Indians work for them in the sun? But

'They stopped only to drink, and then fought again.'

when the drink got into us, the quarrelling began. When rovers quarrel, they fight. The men were light-headed, to begin with, thinking of their great windfall; and the Spanish wine is heady when you have taken much more than a quart or two, and they very soon began to quarrel over the division of the money. For some wanted to tear up the articles, whereby the Captain took eight shares and the officers eighteen, and all to share-and-share alike. And then swords were drawn and pistols cocked; and those of us who had kept reasonably sober went hastily below. Among these were the first and second mates, and the bo's'n, and myself. But the Captain was mad with drink. We kept below, while the trampling and the fighting went on all night long, for they stopped only to drink, and then fought again like so many devils, not caring with whom they fought, still less for what cause. The men were resolute fellows, but they never showed half so much courage against the enemy as they did against each other; and those who had been in the morning the heartiest friends and brothers

were at night murdering each other with the utmost ferocity.

'They stopped at last; not because they were appeased, but because they were tired; and all slept on deck, some lying across the dead and wounded. It was a strange sight when we ventured on deck, the work of fighting being over, and saw them in the moonlight all lying about among the cannon, mostly in the waist, dead and living together, the blood still running out of the scuppers. The man at the helm was killed, and lying over his wheel. There was no watch; there were no lights; all sails were set, and the ship was swiftly sailing over the smooth waters with no one to look out, no lights in the bows, and no one to care whether we struck on a rock or not. There were thirty wounded men, whom we carried below and dressed their wounds; but fifteen of them died, their blood being heated by the wine and the salt provisions.

'At sunrise most of the men woke up and shook off their drunkenness, and ashamed they were to find the Captain and twenty men killed

by the night's quarrel. First they sat and looked at each other, sorry and angry. Then they took consolation, thinking there were still enough men to navigate the ship, and fight her, if necessary, and then someone whispered that there were fewer by twenty to share the treasure.

'So we threw the bodies overboard without any funeral service, and I dressed the hurts of those who were wounded, the men resolved to quarrel no more, and all shook hands together.

'I suppose the thought of the money filled all the men's minds, because in the afternoon, when the drinking began again, the quarrelling began. The Captain being dead, they could no longer quarrel over his eight shares; but the officers were left, and they began about their shares. Now, I am sorry to say that both mates, instead of running down below again with the bo's'n and me, stayed on deck and took part in the quarrel. That was a worse night than the other, because it began earlier. Ten more were killed that night, and a great many wounded. What was worse, the morn-

ing brought no cessation, but they fought all day long, and for three days and three nights, drinking all the time like devils, as if they desired that as many should be killed as possible, and as few left to divide the treasure. In the end, when they desisted, we were reduced to sixty men, most of whom had wounds of some kind, and some died afterwards of fever, so that we numbered no more than fifty. I suppose that such a thing hath never before happened, that a ship for four days and four nights should sail any course she pleased, being without a steersman, or a captain, or a watch, having all sails set, and yawing about as she pleased, just as the breeze changed, and so sailing all the time before the wind. It was surely a miracle that we were not all cast away and destroyed. At last, however, the men grew tired and sobered, frightened by the deaths of so many, and now awakened to the new danger that if we met the Spaniard we might not be able to fight him nor to protect our huge treasure.

'So we held a serious council. First, we

were now all rich men, and it behoved us to think of getting home safely with our money, and to run no risks more than we could help, and not to go in search of other ships, but to keep out of the enemy's way.

'Did one ever hear before of an English crew keeping out of the Spaniard's way? But the treasure made cowards of us all. Every man valued his own skin because he was now the owner of so much wealth. Why, what had been before the fighting a share worth two thousand was now worth four, at least. Not a man among us but was worth four thousand pounds and more. Even if we had sighted another galleon I doubt whether we should have ventured to attack her. And the men grew moody and scowling, everyone sitting apart, counting his gains and wishing his shipmates dead, so that his own share should be greater. Never was a ship's crew fuller of murderous thoughts and evil jealousies. Even the wounded men dying of fever could not die quietly, but must shriek and cry out for life, because they were now all made men.'

'Better have tossed the treasure overboard,' said Jack.

'As for our course, we had now sailed a good bit to the south, but we knew not, and we never knew where we were. Look at the chart. Here is the island of Donna Maria Laxara. We were driven north from that island, and we presently sailed south, no man regarding the navigation. The latitude I was able to calculate; but as for the longitude, that was lost, and we knew not how to recover it, there being no one on board except myself who could so much as read.

'After our council, however, we appointed watches, and attended somewhat to the sailing, keeping her course south, in hopes of fetching Juan Fernandez or Masa Fuera. But, Lord! we were hundreds of miles to the west, though we knew it not; and as for Juan Fernandez, we should none of us ever see that island again. So we sailed day after day, but slowly, because the winds were light. The sun now grew hot; we were within the Tropics. The men had somewhat recovered their spirits, and bragged what

they would do when we got home, and how they would fling the money about. Some were for Kingston, but some for Portsmouth; and I have always felt compassion for the girls of Point that they never had the spending of this great haul. For my own part, I always knew that something was going to happen, for surely such a crew of murderers would never be suffered to get safely to port with so much wealth.

'The first thing that happened was that we were becalmed. I know not where, but I think somewhere hereabouts.' Mr. Brinjes pointed to a spot near the middle of the Pacific, far from any other track. 'We were becalmed so long that we drank out all the Spaniard's wine, and now had nothing to drink except water, and that so long in the casks that it was, so to speak, rusty. Also, we soon found that we had not a great quantity of provisions left; and that scurvy, called the Lobillo, showed itself, of which we lost two or three men. And now, if there was no more fighting, there was no more singing and making merry. The men amused themselves with gambling; some of them played away all

their shares, but presently won them back, and then lost them again; or they passed the days, which were tedious, in fishing for sharks—the sea was full of them—sometimes they killed them for food, but one soon gets tired of eating shark; sometimes they played with them, for they would catch two, and put out the eyes of one, and tie their tails together, and so drop them into the sea, when it was pretty to see them pull different ways, and fight and bite at each other just like Christians. Or they would catch one and tie a plank to his tail, so that he could not dive under water or swim away without dragging the plank with him, and so went mad, and lashed the water in his rage. And strange things happened. One day, while we were still becalmed, the needle began to turn all ways, as if the witches had got hold of it—the Jamaica Obeah men know that secret—and another day the sky turned violet colour, with green clouds, very terrifying, and in the night the sea was a blaze of light, so that we were all alarmed, and one young fellow went mad, and cried out that the Day of Judgment was come, and called upon the

sea to hide him from the face of an offended God, and so jumped overboard and was drowned. I think we must have been becalmed for six weeks. At last, however, a breeze sprung up from the nor'-west, and so we continued our course, if that can be called a course which was sailing blindly, on an unknown sea.

'Jack,' Mr. Brinjes cried, 'it will be thy lot—wherefore I tell thee this history—to cruise upon these waters. Not upon the course which the Spaniards take, but west and south of their route. There wilt thou meet, as we did, with strange and beautiful islands filled with kindly people, who paddle in canoes and swim like fishes, and hold all things in common, and live naked. In those latitudes it is always summer all the year round, with warm balmy air; and nobody heeds the time, and there are always rich fruits to eat and delightful fish to catch. They have no religion, and therefore are not afraid; they have no knowledge of the ten commandments, and therefore know not the nature of sin, and have no conscience to trouble

them: they have learned nothing of any future world, and therefore are not anxious; they have no property, and therefore know not envy; they have no diseases, except the incurable disease of age; although their lives are happy, they fear not death, upon which they never think; they neither murder nor rob. What is our modern civilisation, what is the politeness of the age, compared with such happiness as theirs? What is there a man can hope for better than warmth and plenty, the love of women, and the friendship of men, with constant health, sunshine and joy? Do they murder each other? Do they fight duels with each other? Do they gamble away their fortunes? Do they steal and rob? Do they entice away another's wife? Are they clapped into prison for debt, and kept there until they die? Are they hanged for forging, coining, and shop-lifting? Are they flogged at the cart-wheel for anything they do? Are they made to work all day so that another man may grow rich? Are they teased with wars? Must they be starved so that priests may get fat? Do they go in misery and anxiety all their days

for fear of the Bottomless Pit?'—Mr. Brinjes enumerated many other things, which are not the blessings of civilisation, yet exist among us, and not among these savages. 'Why, for the mere joy of living among this people, and breathing their soft air, our men forgot even their great treasure and their jealousies, and became, as it were, foolish; they quarrelled no longer: they rejoiced to go ashore and court the friendship of these soft savages, and to give them beads, knives, fish-hooks, or any little thing, in return for which the people gave them everything they had; for a string of beads, or a piece of bright-coloured silk they would bring out all they possessed; for a bottle of rum, they would, I verily believe, have sold their island. Ah!' Mr. Brinjes heaved a deep sigh. 'I have known true happiness on the African coast; but there the air is hotter and men's passions are fiercer—well, I love the fierce passion and the temperament which breaks suddenly into flame; but I have never seen or heard, anywhere, of any place where the folk are so gentle as in these seas and life is so easy and so sweet.

Heaven keep them long from the accursed Spaniard.

'And as for wonders, I have seen strange things, indeed, which men would not believe. Boys, I do not lie; I have seen bats as big as rabbits, and terrible great serpents which hang from the trees head downwards, and have power by their breath—I know not how—by their breath alone, to draw wild beasts—nay, and man as well—towards them, and so to break their bones and devour them; calamaries, or squids, are there with arms ninety feet long—many have seen them, and avow the truth—which can clutch a whole ship and drag it under water; there are springs of water which have virtue to turn fish into stones; there are flying cats and women fish—yea, fish with heads and breasts like unto women, and tails like the mermaids'; there are shell fish big enough, each one, to dine a boat's crew, and yet leave meat to spare; there are birds'-nests so big that six men cannot span even one; there are beautiful lizards, of all colours, as big as calves. Am I lying to you? No, boys. There was an

island where we gathered a pannier of earth for the cook's galley to lay under his fire. Would you believe that, six months afterwards, we found a bar of gold beneath it, melted out of this little bucket-full of earth? But we could never find that island again. As for the people, the men mostly go naked or nearly naked, and the women have a kind of petticoat made sometimes of feathers, and sometimes of skins, and they have hair so long that it trails upon the ground: their language is a jargon that no one can understand; and if they worship anything, which I doubt, they worship wooden images. Tasman found some of these islands, but he has never been where I have been. No living man—the rest being dead—has been where I have been. Tell me not of Captain Shelvocke! He only followed the Spaniard's track.

'We cruised about contentedly, leading a life like that of King Solomon himself, among these islands, how long, I know not, for we stayed sometimes for whole months off one island. Perhaps it was fifty years, but I think it was no more than two or three. There was

no more talk of the treasure. Some of our crew died, some refused to leave the islands even for their share of the treasure, and preferred a black wife and a life of ease under a warm sun with palm-wine and pandang (which is their kind of food), to any more dangers upon the water. So at length, out of our company of a hundred and twenty there were but five-and-twenty left, among whom to divide the great sum of money. This would give ten thousand pieces each. But by this time the ship, poor thing, was fallen into disrepair, and most of our stores were now expended, so that what with rotten cordage, which would hardly hold a sail, and a leak which she had sprung somewhere, which gained daily, and planks now so soft that you could put a knife into them as into a rotten apple, and her bottom covered with green weeds, like a ditch beside a hedgerow at home, I for one doubted whether she would hold together at all if bad weather came. But in these islands we never found any bad weather.

'By this time all our clothes were worn out. Stockings and shoes we had none, but no one

wanted them. For coat and shirt and all, we had the bales of silk which we found on the galleon; and let me tell you that, in a warm climate, there is no wear like silk, being both soft and cool. We had suffered our beards to grow; we had left off carrying arms, and nobody quarrelled or fought. Our provisions were long since gone, but we had palm-wine, such as the islanders make, and pandang, and we were dexterous at fishing. If we left one island and sailed to another, it was only for the sake of change, for sailors are always a restless folk; and we thought of nothing but to continue the joyful, easy and happy life that we were leading.

'It was I, there being no officers left, who broke up this contentment, and called the men together to speak seriously. I pointed out to them very earnestly that we must resolve, and that immediately, whether we would settle upon some friendly island and break up the old ship, or whether we would without more delay attempt the voyage home. I told them that we were all rich men, and could take our ease

for life, if only we succeeded in getting home; but that we had a leaky and crazy ship, with rotten cordage, worm-eaten planks, and foul bottom, and that we must first put her in some kind of repair before we could think of getting round Cape Horn, and if we did not speedily attempt these repairs the poor old barky would founder beneath us. The men lazily replied they cared nothing whether the ship fell to pieces or no, and were content to live for ever upon one of these islands among the blacks, of whose soft manner of life they were enamoured, and wanted no more fighting or tempests. Such softness stealeth over the souls of all who dwell in these latitudes. This is the reason why the Creolian Spaniard—he of Mexico, Cuba, or Acapulco—is so poor a creature as compared with the Englishman, for the heat and softness of the air have sapped his courage, and made him a coward. One or two among us, however, having still something left of courage, and some recollection of home, persuaded them to consent that we should, when we could find a convenient place, endeavour to

heel the ship over and scrape her, stop the leak if we could, and make her shipshape for rougher weather.

'A few days afterwards, we came to a small archipelago, or collection of small islands. They were not the coral islands, which lie low, and are surrounded by a reef of coral, but were all like hill-tops, rising sheer and steep out of the water, green and wooded to the top, and apparently uninhabited. In one of these we found a curious natural dock or basin, deep and narrow, for all the world like the Greenland Dock at Redriff, and as suitable for our purpose as if we had made it ourselves. Here we resolved to make our dockyard, and to begin by heeling over the ship to get at her bottom. Wherefore, in case of accident, it was first agreed that we should put the treasure ashore in the only boat we possessed, the great storm having stove in the others. We lowered the boxes, and put in the boat five men, of whom I was one, with intent to row ashore, lay the gold in some safe place, and then return to tow the ship into this creek, or rocky natural

dock. So we put off, thinking no danger, and rowed to land.

'Now, mark what happened. The ship was lying, when we left her, in smooth water, all sails furled. There was no wind, not a breath of air; if we had dropped our kedge, which we could not, because there was no bottom, the ship would have ridden anchor apeak. The time of day was afternoon, when air and water are at their stillest; and she was in a kind of channel or narrow sea, with these islands all around, which I should say were quite desolate and uninhabited, yet full of trees and fruits, with plenty of fresh water. We had no more than the length of a furlong to row, the water being deep and the shore of our island shelving steep down into the sea. We landed, hauled up the boat for fear of accident, and began to carry ashore the boxes, in order to lay them together under the trees. You think, perhaps, that a treasure of two hundred and fifty thousand pieces-of-eight is a mighty great matter. So it is, yet they may all be stowed in a few small boxes. We laid them down, then, and left

them (no one being on the island except ourselves) at the foot of a palm.

'And there, my lads,' Mr. Brinjes added slowly, 'there they are to this day. For sure and certain I am that no ship hath been among these islands since. And I know that I could find the place again.'

'Why did you leave the treasure there?'

'You shall hear. When we got down to the shore again, a strange thing—nay, a miracle—had happened. The ship, which we left, as I said, only a furlong from the land, was now—as near as we could guess—two miles. She had none of her canvas spread; there was no breeze to speak of, and yet she was slipping through the water away from us at six knots an hour, as near as we could guess. Wonderful it was to see a ship, without wind or sails, moving so fast. Whether it was witchcraft—which I sometimes think—or a strong current, which may have been the cause, I cannot tell; but our ship had slipped away, and left us behind. We rowed after her; but a little boat, with one pair of oars, cannot overtake

a vessel going six knots an hour, with two miles and more between. Then we thought to make the crew put the ship about, if they could. We shouted and made signals; but, so far as we could discern, no one on board noticed. Perhaps the men were all bewitched, as, I think, must have happened; perhaps they were drinking or sleeping, because in those days they generally spent the time in sleep, whenever they were not drinking or fishing. She seemed to move faster and faster, and the evening was coming on. The sun got low; we had only time to row ashore before the darkness was upon us; and the last we saw of the poor old ship was the sight of her spars with the sinking sun behind them, and the red sky above, and the water spread out before us like a sheet of copper.

'What became of that ship and her company, I know not. But I doubt not that the craft is broken up, and the crew are all dead long ago. For either she struck a reef and was wrecked, and the crew drowned, having no boat; or—which may very well have hap-

pened—the leak grew upon her, and she made so much water that she foundered; or they may have made a raft and landed on some island, where they lived, and, in due course, died of too much palm-wine. And this was the best that could happen to them.

'As for us five men who were left upon the island, we hoped at first that the ship would come back for us, but she did not; then we made up our minds to stay there, and we built a kind of house, and made ourselves easy, and fished, and made pandang. No man need starve upon these islands. But, after a while, we grew tired of the life, and so resolved to attempt escape. So we buried the treasure at the foot of the palm where we had first laid it, and on the trunk we cut a mark; then we rigged a sail of palm leaves, caulked the boat with cocoa-fibre, took some water and such provisions as we could lay up in store, and so left our island and sailed eastward. We were still among islands, and we sailed among them for many weeks—I know not how long. For still, when we were out of sight of one island, we

would sight another and yet another, but not all friendly, nor all so soft and affectionate as

those we had left behind us. So we crept on, from shore to shore and from cape to cape,

until at last we reached the open sea, and no land in sight at all, and presently no provisions.'

'And what happened then?'

'My lads,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'it is a terrible thing to be at sea with no provisions either to eat or to drink. Those who have water may go on for a long time; though I have been told that the body presently swells up and grows restless, and one must move about—which, in a small boat, is difficult. But to have neither food nor water! Then the men's eyes grow fierce and eager: horrible gnawing pains tear them to pieces. All day long they gaze upon the water for a sail, though they know, as we knew, that there can be no sail in those parts. At night, they sleep not; but groan and wish it were day. Then the pains increase, and one would willingly die but for the agony of death: and then the men cease looking upon the ocean, but look in each other's faces—none daring to say what is in every man's mind.'

Here he was silent for awhile.

'All this time we had a steady gentle breeze, so that we sailed easily over smooth water, and all the time we were followed by a shark, which never left us, and was a certain prognostication of death—which we knew and understood. My lads, when that boat was picked up—which was by a Spanish brig, sailing for the port of Acapulco—there was but one man left. All the rest had parted their cable, and the shark had eaten them—that is, some parts of them. The survivor hath never told anyone how he kept himself alive. Perhaps he was able to catch a few fish; perhaps he caught a wild bird; perhaps it rained, and he caught the water as it fell. If ever you do pray for yourself, Jack—but it is best to take your own luck and to pray for others—pray that you be never condemned to sail in an open boat without provisions.' I have read, in some book of shipwrecks, that sailors have been known, in the extremity of their hunger, to kill each other for food. Did Mr. Brinjes and his boat's crew resort to this dreadful method?

'As for the treasure,' he concluded,

solemnly, 'I have bequeathed it, Jack, to thee and to Bess Westmoreland, here, in equal parts. We will sail together, some day, and dig it up. I am old; but I shall not die until I have seen those seas again. We will go together, Jack, and thou shalt be rich. But even now thou art going thither, happy lad! When thy ship comes home, we will get a brig, somehow, and sail away together—Captain Easterbrook in command—and steer for those islands. I know not their longitude, but as to latitude, I am very sure they are about the parallel of 20° S. Oh! I shall find that archipelago. I cannot die until I have breathed those airs again and found the treasure! Jack, thou art heir to a greater estate than any man in England can boast. There is no Earl or Duke who shall hold up his head beside thee. Thou shalt be a Prince, and Bess shall be a Princess.'

He rolled up his chart, and returned to his chair and his pillows, sinking into them with the exhausted air which made one perceive that he was already arrived at extreme old age.

'Forty years ago!' he groaned. 'Where are they gone, those forty years which have taken away my strength? They made me a slave in Acapulco—a slave to a Creolian Spanish devil, who daily flogged and kicked me. Jack,' he sat upright, and his eye flashed fire, 'when we have recovered the treasure we will burn the town of Acapulco, and roast alive every Spaniard in it. Oh, that I could have then got back to the island! But that I could not; and very soon I perceived that I must somehow escape, unless I was to be a slave for life, worse than a negro slave, and made to change my religion or burn. This, though I had lived among the islands like a Pagan, I was unwilling to do. I therefore ran away, and committed myself to the Indians, by whom I was taken across the Isthmus of Panama, where I lived in the woods among my friends the savages for two years and more, before I could find an English ship among those which came trading for mahogany to the coast of Yucatan which would take me off. So that of all that long journey I brought back to Jamaica

with me but one thing—my blue stone for the cure of snake bites.' He pulled it out of his pocket. 'When you are bitten by any of the reptiles and insects of the forest, even by the most venomous, you may apply this stone (I have tried it on myself after a deadly snake-bite), which sticks on the place, and doth not fall off till it hath sucked up all the poison' when it drops of its own weight, and must be put into milk before you can use it again. Forty years ago! When I was young and could enjoy! Life mocks us, Jack. Sometimes I think that we are the sport and the laughter of the gods; but we know nothing. It flies before you have more than tasted of its joys. Give me fifty years more—only fifty years—and set me on the African coast among the Coromantyns, and I will find the secret which their wise women know. It is in the African forests that the herb grows which can cure all disease, even the disease of old age. With my treasure I could buy it, or find it, or compel them to yield it up. Happy boy! happy boy! Go breathe those airs of heaven, and gaze upon

those purple islands! If thou lightest upon an archipelago somewhere in latitude 20° S., where the islands are like hilltops covered with wood, search for one which has on its north side a creek like a natural dock, then look for a palm-tree marked with a cross, and dig beneath it for a treasure. But if thou dost not find that island, then when thy ship comes home we will go together and seek for it, and find the treasure—thine inheritance!'

CHAPTER VIII.

THE 'COUNTESS OF DORSET' SAILS.

'I ALWAYS knew,' said Jack, 'that Mr. Brinjes had been a pirate. I believe he was

surgeon to Bartholomew Roberts, who was killed by Captain Sir Ogle Chaloner in the 'Swallow.' Wherefore he ought, if he had his deserts, to be now hanging in chains with his brother pirates on the Cape Coast. Fifty of them there are dangling in a row. Now we know that he is a cannibal as well, because it is certain he must have eaten up the other four men in the boat. I wonder how the last two determined the matter. And we know that he is the possessor of a great fortune buried under a palm-tree, on an undiscovered island in the South Seas. It is as useful to him as a bag of diamonds in the moon.'

'But he says that he shall sail with you in search of it.'

'Likely, likely,' said Jack. 'Who knows what may happen? He is, I take it, now a hundred years old. He keeps himself alive by his craft. If he was going to die I suppose he would begin to repent. As for his treasure, what do I care for his pieces-of-eight, unless it were to buy a frigate and man her with a

gallant crew, and go fighting the Spaniards and the French?'

They were prophetic words, but this we knew not. Yet you shall hear.

Then the 'Countess of Dorset' sailed away with Jack as one of her midshipmen, upon her long and perilous voyage. She was under orders to sail by way of the Cape of Good Hope, and to survey the coast of that vast unknown continent or island called in part New Holland and in another New Guinea. This accomplished, as far as might be possible, her captain was instructed to cross the ocean and explore that other great island called New Zealand. She was to search after and report upon places which might be of advantage to the British flag. After this she was to continue her voyage of discovery even into the antarctic fields of ice; to penetrate as near to the South Pole as possible, and she was to return by doubling Cape Horn. So that, had she come home in safety, her crew would have circumnavigated the globe.

It would seem, I venture to think, consis-

tent with the dignity as well as with the interest of a great maritime people, such as the English, were such voyages as this always afoot, so that, when one exploring ship returned, another might be despatched; undertaken not only for the discovery of unknown continents and islands, but also for the enlargement of commerce and the enriching of this realm. In the old days the world was nothing but the Mediterranean with the lands lying around that great sea. Man has extended it east and west, north and south, so that we can now boast that we know all the islands of the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean—navigators say that in those seas there remains no more to be found—with the countries of Asia (even China and Japan have been described and exactly mapped by the Roman Catholic missionaries). We know the eastern coast of North and South America from Labrador to Cape Horn, and we are able to lay down the harbours and river mouths of Africa, though of its interior little has yet been visited.

There will perhaps come a time, if the English take the matter in hand without fear of

Spain, when the whole world shall be fully explored, so that there will be nothing left to discover, neither strange races nor strange creatures, nor wonderful plants. My father, who had in his library a copy of the great 'Mappa Mundi,' or Atlas of the late learned Mr. Senex, would often converse seriously on the possibility of finding, in some hitherto unexplored part of the world, the long-lost Ten Tribes, still, he would fondly imagine, practising the Levitical Law in its Mosaic integrity, without adding to it or subtracting from it, and in ignorance of the glosses introduced by Rabbinical and Talmudic doctors. He looked to find this people in vast numbers (in conformity with Prophecy) somewhere between the springs of Tigris and Euphrates, or, perhaps, more to the north, and even on the slopes and among the valleys of the mountains called Caucasus; but, he would confess, without crediting the idle legend of the Sambatyon river, which seems a monstrous story, they may have wandered farther afield, and perhaps are now on some remote island of the Black Sea, the Red Sea,

or even the Indian Ocean. 'The recovery of these tribes,' he said, 'would be a great consolation to pious persons, and would doubtless prove a mighty weapon in the hands of the faithful; or, apart from the Israelites, though this people must be ever foremost in our thoughts, it may very well be that there exist in some remote countries, which have had no intercourse with the outer world for many centuries, some people who were once a branch of the Roman Empire, and have never heard of its decline and fall, who knew nothing of Christ or Mohammed, or of the Hindoo superstitions, but still worship after the manner of the Greeks and Romans. 'Twould be strange, indeed, to witness the rites of Jove and Venus; those of the great Sun god; of Ceres, the goddess of fertility; of Bacchus, the god of joy and wine; and of Pan, of whose death these people perhaps know not: or it would be strange to see them flocking to consult the oracles: and one would willingly, if it were allowed to a Christian, be initiated into the mysteries of Eleusis, long since lost, though some have pre-

tended that they are concealed in the Sixth Book of Virgil's "Æneid," and some still look for them in Apuleius' "Golden Ass." Again, there must be somewhere on earth the wandering Jew, named Cartaphilus, Ahasuerus, or, according to others, Isaac Laquedem, who is credibly reported to have been last seen, and that not so very long ago, in Paris. To sit down and talk with him, if his memory is still good, would be like finding a Fifth Gospel. Or there may be in the interior of that great southern continent which they call New Holland great and powerful nations, with another civilisation than our own, and arts of which we know nothing. We have, it is true, invented gunpowder, the use of which, to rude people, appears a kind of magic; and we have contrived by our wit many ingenious mechanical devices. But there are, surely, many other secrets which man can compel Nature to surrender; and there may be tribes which possess these secrets—as, for example, if one may so speak without blasphemy, the command and control of lightning, which now strikes

here and there at random, as we say, if anything in this world is suffered to be at random; and the mastery over the other elements of the earth—the wind, the storm, the ice, the snow, which now only obey the word and will of the Lord. Or there may have been discovered in these countries—who knows?—a universal medicine for all diseases; for, since death is the necessary result of decay or disease, when it is not accident, there may be races who have discovered some herb or simple by virtue of which natural decay may be prevented, and so man may continue to live as long as he please; which, for the devout Christian, who looks forward to his eternal rest, would not be long. Or there may even be found offshoots or colonies of such ancient races as the Phœnicians, of which stock came the Carthaginians; and so we may, perhaps, at length learn by what accident this branch of the Semitic race—a most civilised and cultivated branch—hath left no literature at all, either of poetry or history; or of the Ethiopians, called by Homer, for some reason unknown to us, blameless. They were expelled

from Egypt by the people whose descendants are now called Copts. Without doubt, they were an interesting people, and remarkable for their primitive virtue, which may have survived. I would look for them on the western shores of the Red Sea. Or somewhere in the world, perhaps in the Pacific Isles, or in the unknown heart of Africa, or the great continent of the Southern Seas, there may be races of giants, dwarfs, and amazons, for there must certainly be some foundation for the stories of such people. There is also the far-famed kingdom of Prester John, which some will have to be the Empire of Abyssinia, whose King and people are known to form a branch of the Christian Church. They boast themselves to be descended from Prince Menelek, son of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, which may possibly be the case, although Holy Writ affords no warrant for the belief. One would be pleased to learn also, if the many strange stories narrated by the Venetian traveller, Marco Polo, be true, or whether he hath repeated things which were merely related to him, as is done by Herodotus.

And again, there is the journey of Mandeville, in which are described men with but one leg, and hippotains, or creatures half horse, half man; so that there may be truth in the legends of Centaurs, though some have thought them to have been merely a people loving horses and addicted to riding.

'Then to descend to creatures: there are existing somewhere, perhaps, whether in the hot and burning forests of South America, through which the great river Oroonoko flows, or in the African deserts, creatures like the winged dragons of which so many stories have been told, with salamanders and other monsters; and in the sea, hideous monsters with bodies many fathoms long, the vast mass floating like an island on the ocean: and great calamaries, of which sailors have reported some with long arms capable of seizing and dragging down to the bottom of the sea, ship, cargo, crew, and all.'

Thus my father would discourse at length; but Jack hath assured us that in this terrible voyage of his, they encountered nothing bigger

than a whale or more terrible than a shark; nor any winged dragon, or serpent more dreadful than the kinds already known; while as for Ten Tribes, or for any men who know more than the Europeans, or have acquired a form of civilisation worthy our attention, he does not believe that there are any such.

We looked not for any news of the 'Countess of Dorset' for three years at least; because, on the voyage on which she was bound, there are no friendly ports where a vessel may receive or send home despatches, though, doubtless, many where fruit and water may be obtained. We did not expect, therefore, to hear any tidings of her until she should return. It was not until fully three years had passed away that we first began to ask ourselves when the ship might be expected to return.

But no news came of the ship, and no letters from those aboard her. The fourth year passed, and still there came no news; and so the fifth, and still no news.

Then those who remembered Jack Easterbrook, and loved him, began to misdoubt that

something had happened to the ship; and, when the sixth year had almost gone without a word, there were few who kept up heart, or had any hope in them. As for the Admiral, he mourned for Jack as for his own son, believing that he must have been cast away with all the ship's company. 'For,' he said, 'had they not all miserably perished, some intelligence would, ere now, have reached us. At the Navy Office they have written off the ship as wrecked, and the officers and crew as dead men, and the clerks have told the women who came to ask after their husbands that they may e'en look after fresh husbands; though this proves nothing. And, though ships have been known to be delayed and forced back by continual and contrary winds, or caught by storms and losing their masts, yet did I never hear of a ship overdue for three years, and then arriving safe. Long ago the underwriters, had she been a merchant-vessel, would have paid off the insurances. No, gentlemen, there is no hope. Our boy is drowned!'

'We were wrecked upon the island of Juan

Fernandez,' said Mr. Shelvocke, 'where we lived, in great misery, on eels, the entrails of seals, and such like for many months; and should still be living there but for the armourer and carpenter, who built for us a craft, thirty feet long, in which we embarked, having no other provision than conger-eel, cut into strips, each strip dipped into the sea and dried in the sun. A more loathsome food 'twere difficult to find. Yet we escaped, taking the Spanish ship "The Santo Jesu," and so came safe home again.'

'Then,' said the Admiral, to whom this story was not new, 'the boy may still live, or, at best, he may linger on some island among the savages, living on shell-fish and the like; and so is as good as dead, since we shall never see him more—poor lad! poor lad! a braver boy never stepped.'

'With submission, Admiral,' said Mr. Brinjes. 'That something must have befallen the ship I do not doubt. It is a sea full of coral reefs, sunken rocks, strange currents, and, in the northern and southern parts, there are, it is certain, sudden storms. We cannot guess

what has happened; still, I am sure that the boy will come back to us. Ask your old negress, Admiral, who is a witch; ask Philadelphy if that boy's eyes when he sailed away were the eyes of one who is going to his death. She can read the eyes of men—ay, and has often read for me, sitting in my shop, in the eyes of those going forth to sea whether they will come back or no—and never once has she proved wrong. Now, Admiral, I have examined the chart over and over again; but can get no comfort from it, nor any clue to what may have happened. An ocean where there are no ports, and where there is but one vessel sailing across it, like the South Pacific, where the "Countess of Dorset" sailed upon—those waters can give no help. But that boy, Admiral, has not been drowned. And he will return to us. His fortune is long and stormy, as Philadelphy, at my request, hath proved in many ways; by the bowl, by the cards, by the mirror, and by the glass ball. I have also had his nativity calculated, and I learn the same story. And, by what small arts and knowledge

I possess, I have learned that his life will not be cut off untimely. What, gentlemen? Do the stars lie? Is there no truth in the magic of the Mandingo woman?'

It is a consolation to know that a happy end to anxiety is certain, even by witchcraft. Yet Jack did not return, and no news concerning his ship.

Many of the crew were Deptford men—volunteers after the peace. Their wives, or widows, on the advice of the clerks in the Navy Office—who were now without hope concerning the ship—married again. This, however, is common among seafaring folk, and the worst that happens, should the husband come home again, is generally no more than a fight and a cracked skull, with forgiveness over a bowl. Nay, there have been known cases in which the true husband has contentedly renounced his wife, and either married another woman or gone away to sea again; perhaps to seek out a new wife in some other port.

These six years, as you may suppose, were not spent at home without changes. The elders

seem to stand still and suffer no change during six years, unless it is that their locks, if they had any to show, would grow grey; but in these days of wigs and shaven cheek there is nothing (happily) to mark the approach of age, save trembling limb and crowsfeet round the eyes, which cannot be concealed. As for me, I was fourteen, or thereabouts, when the 'Countess of Dorset' sailed away; and therefore, after six years, I was twenty, and a man grown, though not to the robust stature promised by Jack when he left us. Castilla was now past seventeen, and, in my eyes, more beautiful, as they say, than the flowers in May. Nothing surprised me more when Jack returned (for I promise you that the black witch was right, and Jack did return) than his coldness towards this nymph. If a fine complexion, eyes of heavenly blue, melting lips, rosy cheeks and smiling mouth, with light hair curling naturally about her forehead, and a figure slight and tall: in short, if Hebe herself—who was the goddess of youthful and virginal beauty, as Venus is the goddess of that riper beauty which is no longer

ignorant of love—was lovely, then was Castilla lovely at that time, and as sweet, gracious, and obliging as ever was Hebe, the cup-bearer to the gods. Why, when Jack came home, I looked to see him fall at her feet at the mere contemplation of so much beauty. But no; he was stark insensible. Castilla moved him not; and this for a reason that you shall shortly learn.

It was during this six years, to speak for a moment of myself, that I passed through the greatest trouble of my life, and touched the highest happiness that I could hope or pray for. My father had, as he thought, set me apart for God's sacred ministry, as Samuel was set apart, from childhood. He had taught me from the first to consider this the holiest vocation for man, as, doubtless, it must be confessed by all; and he had taught me as much Latin and Greek, with the composition of Latin verses, as I was permitted by my natural parts, which are not great, to acquire. And while he perceived very well that it was not in my power to become a great scholar like himself, he comforted and encouraged me by the consideration that piety and

virtue are within the power of every Christian man, together with the other qualities which adorn the sacred profession of priest or minister.

When I grew to the age of sixteen or thereabouts, the time at which a boy generally begins to bethink himself of the future, I found, first, that I could not look forward to the cassock without a feeling of repugnance; and, secondly, that there was no other manner of work in which I took any interest, save one, which for a while was not to be thought of. Indeed, I did not myself consider it possible, though I knew very well that there were some —nay, a good number—who live creditably by exercising the art of painting, which was the only thing I loved.

By this time I was arrived, by continual daily practice, and by some natural aptitude, at a certain proficiency, so that my drawings of ships and boats and the like were, if one may say so, creditable and fit to be shown to any judge of such matters. But when I ventured to hint, in my father's hearing, that a life spent in this occupation, which he considered fri-

volous, might be full of delight to one who loved drawing, the thing was received with so much displeasure that I dared not for some time to open the subject again, but went on, under his directions, making bad Latin verses and reading Cicero and Virgil.

I then began to consider my destined profession with such a distaste as amounted to abhorrence, insomuch that, had I persisted in taking those vows which my father intended and designed for me, I should have committed a most deadly sin, if not the sin which is unpardonable. And yet I ventured not to open my conscience to my father, fearing his displeasure, and knowing very well how much he had set his heart upon my following in his footsteps. I was at length encouraged to do so, however, partly because it smote my soul with contrition to go on pretending acquiescence in my father's wishes, and partly by a thing which made my project appear more likely of success, or, at least, less likely to end in disastrous failure.

There was a certain John Brooking, of

Deptford, now very well known to painters, and to such fame as belongs to modern painters. He was about ten years older than myself, and at first was but a shipwright's assistant in the Yard; but had no heart for his work, and wasted his time in drawing the workshops, the docks, the timbers, bulkheads, anchors—everything that there is to be drawn in the Yard, even giving up to his Art the whole of his Sundays. He was a good-natured, harmless kind of man, who cared little for himself, and had no ambition except to paint all day, to earn enough for his daily wants, and to spend the evenings drinking with his friends. He presently left the Yard, and went away to London, designing to sell his drawings. But, before he went, he gave me great help in teaching me, so far as he himself knew them, the elements of perspective, with certain simple rules of geometry, and the arrangement of lights; and showed me how to lay on water-colours, and how to get the proper tints, and how to produce the effects I desired. I know not how he lived for a while; but, one day, I met him in

the streets of Deptford, and he told me, with glee, that he had found a man—a dealer in pictures—in Leicester Fields, who would buy his drawings of ships, as many as he chose to paint at a guinea a-piece (N.B.—He afterwards found that this honest dealer sold the same pictures for ten guineas a-piece), and that therefore he was now a made man, and had nothing to do but to go on with the work he loved, and paint every day. Which he did, until he died of a consumption, brought on, I suspect, by much strong drink. However, I went to London and visited him one day at his lodging. He had a single room at the top of a house in a court close to the Fields, where his friend the dealer had his shop; it was a good-sized room with a large window looking north, which is the best direction for light. This was his painting-room and his living room, bedroom and kitchen—all in one. Never was a room so littered and untidy and dirty. But John Brooking cared nothing for dirt. He worked there all day long, so long as the light lasted; or he made sketches and studies by the river-

side, which he afterwards made into finished pictures in this simple studio, where he stood at his easel, never tired, a knitted night-cap on his head, and in his shirt-sleeves, and a tobacco-pipe, broken short off, between his lips, for he loved tobacco as much as any old gipsy woman.

Well, his success, such as it was (but indeed I thought of nothing, then, except how just to live by my work so only that I could do the work I desired to do), inflamed me, and I resolved to tell all to my father; which, to make a long story short, I did, though with many misgivings.

He is dead now; and, I doubt not, hath gone to the rest provided for the faithful. It is a place where my love and gratitude may not reach him. I have never passed so unhappy a time as that when it seemed as if I must continue my preparation for the University, in order to perjure my soul by declaring falsely that I was singled out by Heaven to follow the holy calling of a minister; and I have never felt so truly happy as on that day when my father,

with tears in his eyes, bade me vex my soul no longer, for it should be with me as I wished.

So I left Deptford, and went to London, to become a pupil of the celebrated Mr. Hayman; and I hope that I have since done justice to the instructions of that great painter. But I came home often—partly to sketch among the ships, and partly to see Castilla.

Enough of my affairs, which concern this story but little.

CHAPTER IX.

AARON FLETCHER.

THE sixth year came—nay, it had run half its course and more; yet no news of the 'Countess of Dorset.' And there was no longer any doubt that the ship was cast away, and all the crew long since dead. As for Jack, who had been our hope and our pride, of whom we had said that a youth so brave and so masterful must needs rise to greatness, and bring credit upon himself and those who had been his friends, none now ever spoke a word. Or if they did, it was but to say that the loss of the boy had brought age upon the Admiral, and that 'twas great pity a youth of such goodly promise should thus untimely perish. The stars had lied; witchcraft and magic were proved of no avail.

Jack was dead. In the club at the 'Sir John Falstaff' his ship was never talked of, nor was there any further speculation as to her course, for the Admiral's sake, even by Mr. Brinjes. And, by all the world, the boy was well-nigh forgotten. When the greatest of living men, he whose name is most in men's mouths, dies, the daily life of the world is no whit changed; and his place, even in his own work, whatever that may be, is speedily filled up. What then can one expect in the case of a boy?

But in Mr. Brinjes' parlour, where now Bess Westmoreland sat every afternoon, for company, and to cheer the old man's heart, Jack was not forgotten. These two talked about him still. More than this—superstitiously trusting to the negress's magical practices—they confidently expected that he would return again. Well, in the event the forecast proved true; but, if we are to trust to such an oracle, where is religion? If an ignorant negro woman is permitted to find out, by her witchcraft, the secrets of the future, and to foretell them, what shall become of re-

ligion? Then, farewell, faith; farewell, prayer; farewell, trust in Divine Providence; farewell, learning, since ignorance succeeds where wisdom fails!

In six years Bess had, like Castilla, grown from a child to a woman. She was now in her seventeenth year, not yet filled out to the fulness of her figure, but already tall and shapely. If she had been dressed in rags, she would have commanded attention; but she was careful of her dress, and went always becomingly attired, though not above her station (the coral beads that we know of were placed away in some drawer or box out of sight). She was so tall that she topped her father (but he was round-shouldered) by a head and neck, and there was no girl in all the town within her height by an inch and more; she bore herself like a lance, so straight and upright was she. Her nose and chin looked as if they had been carved by a skilful sculptor out of marble, so clear and delicate were they; her eyes were black, as was her hair; but rosy red her lips, and pearly white her teeth. Like many black-haired

women, her cheek was full, but somewhat pale in colour, and her throat was white, not with such a whiteness as lent another charm to the complexion of Castilla, which, although of a sweet and delicate white, yet glowed with a rosy warmth. The whiteness of Bess was a colder or deeper white—a white that does not reflect the light, such as some Italian painters have delighted to portray; her hands were small, and her forehead low, as the Greeks loved it: as for her eyes, they were soft and deep, save when she was roused, and then, indeed, they flashed fire and flame. As became her station, she wore no hoop, and dressed her hair in a simple knot; but she walked as if her limbs were of springing steel; and I am sure no Princess in a hoop and patches could have walked more like a goddess; her arms, when she was at work, were the whitest ever seen, and the best shaped.

I have never disguised, and shall never disguise, my belief, though Castilla will not agree with me—that is, she assents, but without warmth—that Bess was the most beautiful girl

then living; and this I can the more fairly say, because I was never in love with her, any more than a painter is in love with his model. As for love between Bess Westmoreland and myself, that was always impossible. Yet, for suitors, she never lacked any, though she sent all away, not with discourtesy, or with mockery, or with mirth, as some girls will—as if it is a fine thing to dash the hopes of an honest lad, and as if lovers can be had for the trouble of picking them up—but with firmness and with dignity, being too proud to encourage them, or to suffer them to believe that she wanted their wooing. Some of them were substantial and reputable men, whom the daughter of a mere Penman might have been proud to marry. Why, if he had died, what would she have done for her daily bread? To my own knowledge, one of her wooers was gunner's mate in the King's Navy; another was a master wheelwright in the King's Yard; a third was foreman in the Greenland Dock; and, I dare say, there were more of equally respectable place. It became a proverb that there was no man

good enough for Bess Westmoreland; and the other girls, who might otherwise have been envious of her charms, regarded her with open admiration, because she was not only much more beautiful than themselves, yet wished to carry away none of their sweethearts.

One lover alone, out of all, stuck by her, and refused to take her 'No' for an answer. This was Aaron Fletcher, now grown into a young giant, who carried on his father's business of boat-builder, yet was of roving disposition, and kept his smack at Gravesend, or at Leigh, in which he went fishing. Those, however, who spoke of those fishing voyages, were apt to laugh, and to ask why that fishing-boat never came back by daylight.

'I have told you,' said Bess, 'I have told you a hundred times, Aaron, that I will not listen to you. Wherefore, go away in peace, and trouble me no longer. Why, there are dozens of other girls in Deptford, and plenty better-looking than me would take you, and that joyfully.'

'There are not plenty for me,' he replied.

'I want but one. And, Bess, I shall never give up asking. There's nobody in the world loves you better, or would do more for thee. Why am I not good enough? There's money in the stocking, Bess, now father is dead—ay! and more than you think—and more to come. There's as good business doing in my yard as in any boat-builder's on the river, not to speak of the smack, which does a tidy stroke, take year and year about. I am not a drunkard, though once a week or so I may take my glass with the rest. I am strong, and I am young. I wouldn't strike a woman nor treat her cruel. I'd be true and faithful. Come, Bess, what is the matter with me, that thou canst not say "Yea"?'

Well would it have been for her, and for another, too, if she could have said 'Yea,' and taken him. Why did she not? He was tall and strong, and handsome of his kind; he was not esteemed to be ill-tempered; he was not at that time a drinker, save of a cheerful glass; he had a good character, save for the reputation of these fishing voyages of his, which did him

no hurt with anyone. Did not the Admiral himself put Aaron's Nantz upon his own table? He would have made Bess a good husband, if any could, because such a woman, if she is to be happy, must needs have a strong man for a husband, and one who will rule her and make her respect him. Well, indeed, it would have been for her if she had taken this brave fellow; but she could not.

'Bess,' he said, 'you can't be thinking still upon that midshipman? Why, he was but a boy, and you were a child. He's cast away and dead long ago; and if he was not, he wouldn't remember you.'

But she made no reply.

'Tisn't for love of him, Bess, is it? Why, I fought him half a dozen times; and, if he were to come back, I would fight him again.'

She laughed scornfully. 'Tis true, Aaron, the last fight I saw; and where were you at the end of it? Rubbing your head, and looking ruefully at your broken finger. And where was Jack? Walking away with a laugh. But don't talk to me about Jack. Perhaps he

is dead. Living or dead, I don't suppose he would remember or care for a poor girl like me. But I can't marry you, Aaron.'

'You shall,' he said with an oath. 'You shall. I will make you promise to marry me.'

This was a prophecy not made by an oracle. Yet, strange to say, it came true—in a sense. To be sure, it was not the sense that Aaron intended. It has been observed that such prophecies, together with all the prophecies of witches and magicians, when they do come true, never happen in the way hoped for when the prophecy is uttered. Certainly, as you shall see, Aaron's prophecy did turn out true—but the result was not what he had expected and desired. In the same way, Mr. Brinjes' prediction about the South Seas also proved true—yet not in the sense desired and expected by him. As you shall also discover.

'Very well,' said Bess, 'I will promise to marry you, Aaron—when I love you. Can a girl say fairer? Go away now, Aaron; go away and find some other woman who wants

to go marrying, and take pity on her, if you can. But as for me, I will marry no man.'

However, he renewed his importunity: offering her presents, which she refused—such as parcels of lace, flasks of Nantz for her father, rolls of silk, and so forth, all got, I doubt not, in the way of his fishing—and always declaring, in his masterful way, that sooner or later she should promise to marry him.

CHAPTER X.

HOW JACK CAME HOME AGAIN.

AND now I have to tell how Jack was joyfully restored to us. It was in sorry plight, and after many disasters and sore privations, which killed his companions, but left him—to look upon—none the worse, when he came back to good food and decent clothes again. I think that no one had ever a more wonderful story to tell, and yet there was never a worse hand at telling his adventures. Lucky it was for Ulysses, and for Æneas, that they found poets to sing their sufferings and their wanderings, for, I dare say, the former, at least, would have made a poor hand at telling them himself. A greater than Ulysses was here; and no one, until now, has ever told, save imperfectly, the story of his voyage. It will never be narrated

as it ought to be, movingly, and to the life; and the sailing of the 'Countess of Dorset' among the Pacific Islands, and the discoveries which she made, and the dreadful calamities which befell the ship and the crew will no more be remembered than if she had been some poor and insignificant collier, cast away with her crew of half a dozen men and a boy, on the Goodwin Sands.

It is also a strange circumstance that his life should have been saved by the man who, man and boy, was his steady and constant enemy. Nay, as you will see in the sequel, his life was once more saved by the same hand—a thing which clearly shows the hand of Providence, if it were only designed in mercy as a rebuke to the man who desired and even endeavoured to compass the death of his enemy and rival. Yet I never heard tell that Aaron Fletcher repented of the hatred which he always bore to Jack.

One night in the month of September, and the year seventeen hundred and fifty-six—a dark and cloudy night, the stars hidden and no

moon, a light breeze flying, but only in puffs, and hardly enough to fill the canvas, and a soft and soaking rain falling—a small vessel, rigged with fore-sail, sprit-sail, main-sail, and top-sail, was slowly making her way across the German Ocean. Her name was the 'Willing Mind,' of Sheerness; she was manned by a crew of five, two more than are generally taken on board a fishing-craft of her dimensions. Of these men, the skipper sat in the stern, the ropes in his hand, two were lying asleep beside the skipper, covered with a tarpaulin, and two were in the bows keeping watch. She carried no light, but she was sailing well north of the track of outward-bound vessels, and was by this time too close to the Essex coast to fear being run down by colliers. Perhaps the watch was on the look-out for lights on the coast, or for a King's revenue cutter, of which there are many along the east coast, and they greatly molest this kind of craft, overhauling them suspiciously, and searching for brandy and the like, impressing the honest fishermen on board, and sometimes even imprisoning them, haling them

before a magistrate, and bringing them to trial; and even, if they show much resistance, hanging them; and by their very appearance always obliging the crew to throw overboard, if they have time, the whole of their cargo. It generally consists of a strange kind of fish, in the shape of kegs, runlets, and jars, with bungs and corks in their mouths. Perhaps the 'Willing Mind' showed no light because the skipper and his crew dreaded being captured by a French privateer, for we were again at war with France, and the Channel was crowded with these hornets, though, as a rule, they hardly ventured north of the Goodwin Sands, or off the Nore.

The boat slipped through the water slowly and silently, save for a gentle ripple in the bows. There was little way on her, but she kept moving.

'I take it,' said the skipper, grumbling, 'that it is already past midnight; we ought to have made Shoeburyness by now. In three hours it will be daylight, and perhaps the dogs upon us—and with such a cargo!'

'The breeze will freshen with the dawn, Master,' said one of the men in the bow.

'And then it may be too late. And we haven't had such a cargo for a twelvemonth. What is that off the starboard bow?'

'It looks like a buoy. But it can't be a buoy!' It was a black object, indistinct as yet, but they were nearing it. Presently, a hoarse cry of 'Sail ahoy!' came across the water. It was repeated twice.

'It is a boat with four men in her,' said the watch, making her out. 'A little dingy she is. Now, what the plague is she doing out here?'

'Sail ahoy!' came across the water again. And now they could distinguish the figures of three or four men standing up in the boat.

The skipper cursed and swore, and put up his helm.

'Sail ahoy! for Jesus' sake! We are sinking!' cried the men.

The skipper cursed and swore again, louder and deeper; but he altered his course, and bore down upon the boat.

There were five men in her, but one of

them lay in the stern with his head upon his arms, motionless. The boat had neither oars,

mast, or sails; she was half full of water, and the men were baling her with their hats.

'For God's sake, take us aboard!' they cried. 'It is as much as we can do to keep afloat, and we are starving!'

'Who are you?' asked the skipper.

'We have broke from a French prison,' they told him; 'and four days out, and nothing to eat.'

Still the skipper hesitated.

'Cap'en,' said one of the men, 'we can guess, pretty easy, who you are, and what is your business. That is nothing to us. Take us on board. You shan't regret it. Only take us on board and give us something to eat, and set us ashore on English soil; and if you were laden with all the brandy there is in the world, you should never be sorry for coming to our help.'

The skipper cursed them again for interrupting his run. But it would have been the most shocking inhumanity to refuse; therefore, with a bad grace, and sulkily, he ordered them to get on board as quickly as they could. This they did; but they had to help the man in the stern, because he had got an open wound in his

head and had lost much blood, besides being nearly starved. So they lifted him in and laid him on a tarpaulin, and cast off their crazy little boat, and the smack went on her course again.

Then the skipper, who was not wanting in generosity, though he cursed them for stopping him, pulled out of the locker such provisions as might be expected in such a craft—consisting only of bread, mouldy Dutch cheese, and some onions. But, Lord! if these had been the greatest dainties ever set before an Alderman the men could not have devoured the food more greedily; even the wounded man lifting his head and eating ravenously. When there was nothing at all left to be eaten, the skipper passed round a bottle of brandy and a pannikin, which were received with heartfelt gratitude too deep for power of speech. For cold and starving men bread and cheese and onions make a banquet, but brandy in addition—oh! 'twas too much!

When they had eaten up everything, therefore, and drunk as much brandy as their rescuer would give them, they began, as sailors will,

through a spokesman, to relate their story. Everybody knows, that at the outbreak of the war the French fleet put so many privateers to sea, and we had so few, that there was nothing but the capture of English merchantmen going up and down the Channel, and the French prisons were soon choked with poor devils laid up by the heels, and waiting for a general exchange, or for the close of the war, to be released. Three of the men had been taken by a privateer out of a West Indiaman, and conveyed with others up the country to a place called St. Omer, which is a fortified town some twenty miles from Dunquerque, and about the same distance from Calais, and were then clapped into prison in the citadel, or the barracks, or the town jail, I know not which. Wherever it was, they found there, among the other prisoners, the man who lay wounded on the tarpaulin, not able to sit up, and saying nothing. And he it was, they said, who had devised the plan of their escape. There were a dozen more who were in the plot, and should have made the attempt, but at the last moment they lost heart, as always

happens in an adventure so desperate, and remained behind. As things turned out, it was lucky that there were no more of them, because there was certainly no room for any more in their rickety little boat.

I do not rightly understand how the escape was effected, because in the subject of fortifications I am ignorant, though Jack hath often endeavoured to explain to me the nature of scarp, counterscarp, bastion, and so forth. However, they surmounted all these difficulties, and in the dead of night they found themselves on the right side of the ramparts—that is, on the outside—and with open country all round them. Then, steering by the stars, they made due north. Before they got half way on their journey they were surprised by dawn, and forced to seek a hiding-place, which they found in a wood or coppice beside a river, where the shelter was good, though the lying was wet and swampy. Here they stayed all day, with nothing to eat except a few berries, then happily ripe. At nightfall they started again, and, as they judged, soon after midnight found them-

selves on a sandy coast somewhere between Calais and Dunquerque, near a place called Gravelines. But there was no boat on this open and deserted coast, and they wandered up and down for a long time seeking for one, and fearing lest they might again have to seek a night's shelter. When, at last, they found one, it was hauled up high and dry on the sand. This would have mattered little; but, unluckily, her owner, or a man who behaved like her owner, was sleeping on the sand beside her. There was no choice, but they must needs have her, and while they dragged her down to the sea, the Frenchman woke up, and perceiving that he was being robbed of his boat, he lugged out a knife and made at them, and, before he could be fairly knocked on the head, gave their leader a desperate cut across the face, from which he lost a great deal of blood, and was much weakened. They got him safely into the boat, however, though he was fainting from the wound, and so put to sea, and hoped to be able to row across the Channel, if they should have the good luck to 'scape the privateers, and make

the port of Dover, in eight or ten hours; or, perhaps, they might be picked up by some English ship, if they were lucky. They had neither mast nor sail in the boat, and there were no provisions in it of any kind. Also, as they quickly discovered, she very soon sprung a leak, and had to be baled out continually. They rowed on, however, taking turns, for three or four hours. Then a most unfortunate thing happened. For, while two of them were rowing lustily, in their eagerness to lose no time, and to get across and land on English soil again, and the oars being not only small but old and rotten, they both snapped short off close to the rowlock, at the same time. This accident dashed all their hopes, for, though they tore up two of the boat's planks, thinking to row with them, it was slow work; then they tried to make a sail with a shirt and one of these planks, there being a light breeze from the sou'-west, and they got, as they supposed, into the current. They were carried, certainly, as they discovered at daybreak, out of sight of the French coast, but also, which was another

misfortune, outside the track of ships, and so, though they saw many sail in the distance, they passed none near enough to be picked up, and in this miserable condition tossed and drifted for four days and four nights, and were now well-nigh spent, and the leak in the boat growing every moment worse, so that she threatened to fill with water and to sink under them unless they baled continually.

'It's easy guessing,' they repeated, after they had told their story, 'what you've got on board: that's no concern of ours. Only you put us ashore. Without making bold to inquire further, tell us where we are, and how far from shore.'

'As to where we are,' said the skipper, 'the night is dark, and I don't rightly know. But to the best of my guessing, we are not far from Shoeburyness, which should lay right ahead; but the shore is low, and difficult to make out.'

'Mate,' said the spokesman, 'land us as far from any port as you can. I guess the press is hot up the river.'

The skipper said that there was a very hot

press; that as to himself, he was going to land at Shoeburyness, where he could put them ashore, and they could then shift for themselves, and make their way inland, if so be they had friends anywhere.

'As for this poor fellow,' said the man, pointing to the one who was lying down, 'he says he's an officer, though he doesn't look like one in those rags of his. So he's got nothing to fear from a press. Don't put him ashore, skipper. Take him to some place where he will get his wound dressed. If what he says is true, he will be able to pay you for the service.'

'I will take him,' said the skipper, 'to Gravesend. That is all I can do for him. After that, he must shift for himself.'

Shortly after this, and before daybreak, they made the land between the village of Southend and Shoeburyness. Here they landed the four men, who, with many vows of gratitude, expressed in sailor-like fashion—namely, with appeals to the Divine Power to blast them and sink them if they ever forgot this service—

quickly vanished inland. It matters nothing what became of these poor fellows; but intelligence came from Maldon, shortly afterwards, that a gang of four men, dressed like sailors, had been apprehended stealing a sheep. They made a desperate fight, and one of the posse comitatus was dangerously wounded. In the end, they were overpowered, and taken to Chelmsford Jail, where, in due course, they were all hanged. If these were the men landed from the 'Willing Mind,' the poor wretches had better have remained in their prison at St. Omer, where, at least, they were living a life of innocency, although half-starved with their meagre soup and sour bread. But perhaps the men who were hanged were another gang.

Now, as regards the cargo of the 'Willing Mind'—I mean that load of fish, all with corks and bungs in their mouths—it would be a shame for me to disclose where it was landed, and by whom it was received, though one may know very well. I am not a spy and an informer; the revenue officers may find out for themselves the secrets of the trade which they

have to stop, if they can. I say not whether it is such a trade as a person of tender conscience may undertake; but, at least, this much may be said for it—that those who practise it know beforehand the risks they run, and the punishment which awaits them if they are captured.

Enough to say, that the landing was successful, and that about noon that day the 'Willing Mind,' now in ballast, was running up the Thames with full sail, wind and tide favourable, bound for Gravesend; and the wounded man was so far recovered, that he was now sitting up and looking about him. He was a wild creature to look at, being, to begin with, horribly thin, as if he had had no food for months; he had suffered his beard to grow, and it now covered his whole face, so that he looked like a Turk, with his hair long and uncombed; his head was bound up with a dirty and bloody clout, which hid one eye; there was blood upon his cheek. Presently, while he looked about him with lack-lustre gaze, the pain of his wound being great, his eye fell upon

the skipper, and he started and became suddenly alive and alert.

'Aaron Fletcher, by the Lord!' he cried.

'That is my name,' replied the skipper. 'I am not ashamed of it. But I don't know you, mate.'

'You have forgotten me, Aaron. If you had known me, you would have been all the more anxious to save my life. Of that I am well assured. We should have foundered in five minutes. As for me, I cared nothing whether we sank or swam. All is one to a starving man. Give me another tot of brandy, Aaron. Don't you recognise me now?'

'Man! I never clapped eyes on you before to my knowledge. But since you know my name, and therefore, likely, where I live, so that you might do mischief, let me tell you'—here he insisted or emphasised the assurance by a dozen or two of round oaths, such as he and his kind have always ready to hand for all purposes—'that if you are going to turn informer, after all you have seen, it would be better for you if we had thrown you overboard

at once with a shot to your heels. One or other of us, my lad, will have your blood.'

The other men of the crew murmured approval of this sentiment with additions of their own invention, about cutting the weasand, breaking bones and limbs, gouging out eyes, and so forth.

'The same old Aaron,' said the man. 'Why, you have not changed, save that you are stouter and bigger. The same sweet and unsuspicious temper. I wonder if there is another such treat in store for us both as we had when last we met?'

'Who the devil are you?' asked Aaron, staring, partly because the man knew him, and because so ragged a fellow should talk with such boldness. But as yet quite unsuspecting.

'That, my friend, if you cannot guess, I shall not tell you. As for your kegs, fear not. I care nothing where they were bestowed nor to whom they were consigned, nor where they came from. So far as I am concerned, you are safe. Besides, you have saved my life. This cut in the head, d'ye see, cost me so much

blood that I do not think I could have endured another night of starvation. Why, man, I have had to live for weeks with nothing but a taste now and again, when the chance came, of putrid seal or rotten fish! I'm downright tired of starving.'

'Who are you, then?' Aaron looked at him hard, but could make nothing of him.

Yet it was strange that he did not begin to suspect. This, I take it, was because, like everybody else, he had quite made up his mind that Jack was long since dead, and so he was gone clean out of his mind. This is so, when a man is dead. His face goes out of our mind because we never think to meet him again.

'Well,' he said at length, 'it don't signify a button who you are. You've got nothing against me, even should you lay information. But you're down on your luck, whoever you be. And you've the cut of a sailor about you. Wherefore, mate, take my advice and keep well in shore, for the press is hot all the way from Margate to Chelsea, and, wounded or not,

they'll have you if they can, and three dozen or more for skulking, if you are not fit for duty in four-and-twenty hours.'

'Thank you, Aaron,' the man replied, and so lay down again and went to sleep. But Aaron kept looking at him, uneasy, yet not able to remember him.

So they made their way to Gravesend, and arrived off that port in the afternoon.

'I thank you, Aaron,' said the passenger, waking up, and getting to his feet. 'The food and the brandy and the sleep have set me up again. I believe I shall be able to walk the rest of the journey. One more favour, Aaron. After saving my life, it is a small thing for you to do. I am without a single penny. Lend me a shilling, which I will bring myself to the boat-house, and repay you when you come home. You don't know me, Aaron! Why, man, how goes the boat-building?'

Aaron produced the money, still staring with all his eyes, as the children say.

'A shilling, Aaron, is not much. If it was six years ago, I should say we would fight for

it.' So he dashed back the hair that hung about his face, and looked Aaron full in the face with a laugh.

'Good Lord!' cried Aaron. 'It's Jack Easterbrook!'

'Mr. Easterbrook, ye dog. I am in rags, but I am a King's officer still, and you are nothing but a common smuggler.'

'It's Mr. Jack Easterbrook,' Aaron repeated. 'He's come back again!'

'As for this shilling, Aaron, shall we fight for it now?'

'But——Oh, Lord! How in the world did you get in such rags as this? And where's the "Countess of Dorset"?'

'As for the rags, where I got them was in the Isle of Chiloe, off the Patagonian coast, and if I had not got them I should have come home as naked as Adam in his innocency. And as for the "Countess of Dorset," her timbers are where I got my rags, on the coast of South America, and her crew are mostly beside her timbers, such parts of them, that is, as the crabs have not been able to devour.'

'Oh, Lord!' Aaron gazed as if at a ghost, and could say no more.

'Do they think me dead, Aaron?'

'All of them; except, I am told, Mr. Brinjes.'

'Oh! and the Admiral?'

'It isn't for the likes of me to know what his honour thinks, sir,' said Aaron. 'But he's been going heavy for a good time past, and they do say as how he frets more than a bit about your drowning.'

Jack was silent for a bit.

'And Bess Westmoreland?' he asked.

'What has she got to think about you for? You are a gentleman, though in rags at this present moment. As for Bess, she is but the daughter of a Penman. She belongs to the likes of us, not to gentlemen officers.'

'She must be grown a big girl now. Well, Aaron, and Mr. Brinjes?'

'He's a devil. He's worse than ever. He gave Lance Pegg, of Anchor Alley, the rheumatics last week, and threatens her with worse for rope's-endin' that girl of hers. He's a devil!

and never a day older since your honour went away.'

'So, Aaron, you have saved my life, though you did not intend it. Yet I take it kindly. I do not think you would have suffered your old townsman and your old crony, whom you used to fight whenever you met him, to drown, if you had known who was in the boat.'

'I would not, sir,' said Aaron, stoutly. 'Yet, to tell the truth, I'd as lief you were at the bottom of the sea, in Davy's locker, where we all thought you were, and where you ought to be by rights, your ship and the crew all being there except you.'

'Give me thy hand, Aaron.'

So they shook hands.

'As for the shilling, sir,' said Aaron, 'let me make it a guinea, and if your honour will let me pay for a decent suit of clothes, or shoes, at least——'

'Nay, Aaron. As you found me, so shall they find me. The shilling will be enough to pay for all I want; and I have gone so long barefooted that my feet are as hard as leather,

and feel not the road. As for the shilling, we will, perhaps, fight for it. But not yet. You would not, I am sure, being an honourable man, wish me to fight until I have recovered my strength. Farewell, Aaron.'

So he stepped ashore, and with such lightness of step as reminded Aaron of the old days when Jack stepped down the street in his midshipman's uniform, free and careless. He was light of step because of the joy of returning home, yet he was still somewhat dizzy and weak. However, he had a shilling to pay for supper, and he had but twenty miles to walk, or thereabouts. A short distance for those who are strong and well, but a long journey to be done on foot by a man with an open wound on his forehead, and half-starved to boot, so that it is not surprising that he did not reach Deptford till noon next day.

The next day was Sunday.

At half-past twelve, the Vicar of St. Paul's finished a most learned discourse upon certain philosophical systems of the Phœnicians, the Chaldeans, the Greeks, and the Egyptians, de-

ducing Christian truths, by the method known as analogy, from each. Castilla, I remember, sat with folded hands, and eyes fixed upon the preacher, as if she understood every word. And the Admiral slept. The poorer part of the congregation behaved after their kind; that is to say, the men slept, the women sat perfectly still, and the boys fidgeted. When one became too noisy, he was taken out by the beadle and caned in the churchyard among the tombs, the other boys all listening, and counting the strokes, as if the number administered was in itself a fine moral lesson (the same thing may be observed both in the Army and the Navy). When I read that the Papists attach a particular merit to mere attendance or presence during the performance of their mass, I cannot but think that the same indulgence might be extended to our poor ignorant rustics and servants for their patient attendance at the sermons of which they understand nothing.

When morning service was ended, the Vicar came down from the pulpit and walked into the vestry, preceded by the beadle, carrying his

stick of office, and followed by the clerk. Then the people all stood up in respect to the Quality, who led the way out of the church. First there walked down the aisle the Admiral, his wig that morning combed, curled, and powdered, and with him his lady in hoop and satin, and his daughter Castilla in hoop and sarsnet, very beautiful to behold. After them came Mr. Pett, the shipbuilder, with his wife and family; Mr. Underhill, the retired purser, who was a bachelor; Mr. Mostyn, the Cocket-writer of the Customs; Mr. Shelvocke with his family, and others who lived in the genteel houses beside the Bridge; and with them I walked down the aisle, though only a painter, and an apprentice at that. When we had passed down the aisle, and conversed for a few minutes standing on the great stone terrace which makes St. Paul's Church so stately, we separated, some taking the pathway through the churchyard to the right into Church Lane, and others to the left into Bridge Street. I walked beside Castilla, who carried her Book of Common Prayer, and was silent, doubtless meditating on the spiritual

truths of the Vicar's sermon. Behind us came three out of the Admiral's four negroes, and Philadelphy, splendid in her red silk handkerchief and a blue speckled frock. And after us came the common sort flocking out together, the boys, for their part, glad that the sermon was finished, and all of them longing for the Sunday's beef and pudding. The poor do certainly exercise the virtue of patience more than the rich, especially at a sermon, of which, when a learned Divine, like my father, preaches it, they can understand not one word. So that one may forgive them for the unrestrained joy which, on every Sunday, the faces in the side aisles manifest at the conclusion of the discourse, not only of the boys and girls, but of the grown-up people as well. Among those who followed after the better sort were Mr. Westmoreland, the Penman, and his daughter—he bent and feeble, round-shouldered and meek, leaning on his stick; and by his side, Bess, tall and upright as a lance, dressed somewhat finer than those of her condition are wont to go, and holding her head in the air as if she was a

Queen. Strange that her father should be so meek and humble, and that no learning of the Catechism could teach Bess meekness or humility. There is, I now understand, a certain quality in beauty which prevents its owner from lowliness, however humble be her station. The young fellows looked after Bess as she came forth from the church; but she regarded them with proud eyes, and passed on disdainful, as if she was too high and good for any of them. Therefore they followed after the other girls, who were as willing as Bess was proud, and perhaps, in these honest fellows' eyes, not much less beautiful.

Just opposite the churchyard gate, close to the principal entrance of Trinity Hospital, we observed, as we passed into Church Lane and turned to the right, a fellow leaning against the posts. He was tall and big-limbed, but thin and wasted, as if he had been suffering from some disease or dreadful privations. One could very well see that he was a sailor, though in his dress, such as it was, there was little to show it. He wore a common sailor's petticoat or

slop, he had a ragged waistcoat, buttoned up to the neck, because he had neither shirt nor cravat; he was bareheaded and barefooted; his hair was long and matted; round his forehead was tied a dirty clout or handkerchief, red with streaks of blood, so that he seemed to have but one eye.

As we came out of the churchyard, I caught sight of him, and thought, naturally, how he would look if he were drawn just so, in those rags, and put into a picture, making one of a group. And I saw, but suspected nothing—how could we be all so foolish and blind as not to see, with half an eye, who it was?—how he started when we came forth from the churchyard, and made as if he would move towards us, perhaps to beg, but checked himself, and waited where he was.

But the Admiral stopped, and surveyed him leisurely from head to foot. Then he lugged out his purse, and found a crown-piece, which he bestowed upon the man.

'My lad,' he said, 'thou art a sailor, and thou hast fallen among thieves, belike. I will

not ask where thy wound was gotten, nor in what company; nor how thou art in such ragged plight. Take this crown-piece. Go into dock and refit. When this is spent, come to me for another. And when all is well again, volunteer and serve the King, and so keep out of mischief.'

He shook his gold stick with admonition, and stumped away. But the man took the coin and held it in his hand, without saying a word of thanks. I, still watching him in my foolish way, because so picturesque a rogue had I never seen, most of our ragged vagabonds spoiling their beauty, so to speak, by going in an old wig, torn in half, burned, uncombed, and dirty, that hath, perhaps, been used by a shoeblack to rub the shoes in his trade. There is no picturesqueness possible in an old wig. Yet, I was not so stupid but I saw in the man's eye a look which was both wistful and sorrowful, though I did not then interpret it in that manner.

So the Admiral went on, followed by his good lady, who held her skirts in her hand,

and stared at the man in her turn, as ladies sometimes look at such poor wretches—namely, as if they were of a different clay, and had another kind of Adam for their father. But one must not expect a gentlewoman, such as the Admiral's lady (she was by birth distantly connected with the Right Honourable the Earl of Bute, and a Scotswoman) to understand how, beneath the most rugged exterior, there may be found admirable qualities of courage and fidelity. So she gazed upon him, turned her head, and went her way after the Admiral. After her came Castilla. 'Poor man!' she said, in her sweet way, 'I would I had some money to give thee; but I have none. Truly thou art to be pitied. I wish thee better fortune and a ship.'

She had been taught by her father, and fully believed it, that the only place where these rough tarpaulins were happy and out of mischief was on board ship. Seeing that they are so often drunk and fighting, and in trouble on shore, perhaps she was right. But then ashore there is no bo's'n, and there is no cat-o'-

nine-tails, save for pickpockets. So she looked at him compassionately, and he moved his lips as if he would have spoken, but did not. And so she passed on her way.

Then came I myself. I said nothing, but he looked at me with a kind of sorrowful wonder. I remembered, directly afterwards, what that eye of his said as plain as it could speak; but at the moment I was deaf to its voice, and blind and stupid, thinking only of a bundle of rags on a tall figure, and how the man and the rags would look in a picture. After ourselves came the negroes and Philadelphy. The men rolled their eyes at this poor fellow with the contempt that a fat and well-fed negro always feels, forgetful of his skin, for a starving white man, and if their master had been out of hearing they would have laughed aloud and even rolled on the ground in the enjoyment of his suffering. Nothing makes a negro laugh more joyfully than to see somebody hurt. That is, perhaps, why some of their kings celebrate their most joyful festivals with horrid murders and rivers of blood.

Philadelphy followed her young mistress, and had no eyes for anyone else, being, though a witch and a sorceress, and an Obeah woman, faithful to Miss Castilla.

When we had passed, the Vicar came out of the vestry and so into Church Lane.

'Why, my friend,' he said, stopping to contemplate the scarecrow, 'where hast thou gotten these rags and this wound?'

'I have escaped, sir, from a French prison, and have received a hurt on the forehead.'

Something in his manner touched the Vicar.

'Are you a common sailor?' he asked.

'Do I look like aught else, sir? Heard one ever of an officer in such rags as mine?'

'Yet you speak like an educated man. And your voice seems familiar to me. Follow me to the vicarage, my poor man, where you shall have a plate of victuals and a tankard of ale, and we will see what can be done to replace some of these rags, which are not proper for a Christian man and an honest man to wear.'

'She fell on her knees upon the muddy ground.'

'How doth your Reverence know that I am an honest man?'

'Nay, that I know not, and there are many rogues abroad. But it is not for me—God forbid!—to attempt to separate the sheep from the goats. Therefore, sheep or goat, follow me and be welcome, in the name of our Saviour.'

The Vicar left him, and he turned and would have followed, but for one thing.

We who were a few yards in advance, unthinking and unsuspecting, heard a cry which stopped the very beating of our hearts.

The cry was from Bess Westmoreland.

She, too, saw the ragged sailor when she passed through the churchyard gate. But she did not, like the rest of us, pass on, and think no more. She suddenly broke from her father, pushed the crowd away to right and left, and fell on her knees upon the muddy ground, catching the man by both hands, like a mad thing, and crying:

'Oh, Jack! Jack! Jack! He is home again! Jack Easterbrook has come home again!'

Then, as we crowded round, we saw the tears run down his face. It was the first time, and the last, that ever any man saw Jack weep; yet he had plenty to cry for, both before this and after. He caught the girl by both hands, and bent over her, saying, as we all heard:

'Oh! Bess, Bess, none of them remembered me—not even Luke; none of them thought of me! But you remembered me, Bess! Oh! Bess, you remembered me!'

CHAPTER XI.

THE VOYAGE OF THE 'COUNTESS OF DORSET.'

HEN we all crowded round him, shaking his hand and rejoicing; and the Admiral first swore at Jack for playing a trick upon us (but, alas! it proved to be no trick), and then at himself for his stupidity, and then could say nothing for the tears which drowned his voice and ran down his cheeks. And Jack declared first that he would never part with the Admiral's crown-piece, and next that he would not put off his rags until he had first eaten the Vicar's plate of victuals and drank his tankard. This he did; and the Vicar said grace solemnly, with thanks for the safe return of the long-lost sailor; and we all flocked round him to see him eat and drink. A pretty sight it was, for he had not

tasted honest roast beef for six long years. Then, though it was Sunday, nothing would do but they must ring the church bells, as if they would bring down the tower about their heads. And Mr. Brinjes came running in shirt-sleeves, waistcoat, and night-cap, just as he left his shop, the lancet still in his hand with which he had been bleeding people all the morning.

Thus we carried home our poor ragged prodigal. After the first confusion was over I looked for Bess, but she had slipped away, unheeded.

Then came the barber, and cut off his frightful beard, trimmed and powdered his hair, and tied it behind with black ribbon, so that he looked now like a Christian. More suitable clothes were found for him, and as for his wound, Mr. Brinjes dressed it for him, and covered it with plaister, telling him that it was an ugly gash, but in a few days would be healed, save for the scar across his forehead, a thing which no sailor heeds; and then he stood before us, a proper and handsome fellow indeed. He had left us a lad, and he came back to us a man,

over six feet in height, and with broad shoulders and stout legs to match. His cheeks, 'tis true, were somewhat hollow and pale, because he had been on short commons for four years, as you will presently learn.

Now, you will believe that we were eager to know what had befallen him; but we could at first get little talk with him, for all that afternoon there came to the house people of every kind anxious to see and converse with this young hero, who had, it was reported in the town, escaped from the French after six years of captivity. The Church Service in both churches was that afternoon read to empty pews, because all the worshippers were in the Admiral's garden. Among them came the widows of those Deptford men who had sailed with Jack in the 'Countess of Dorset'; many of them had long before this married again, and all were anxious to hear of their late husbands, inquiring particularly into the circumstances of their death, and appearing to find consolation in considering the dreadful nature of their sufferings. There came all Jack's former friends, who had not

forgotten him, such as almsmen from Trinity Hospital, and pensioners from Greenwich, old sailors from Deptford and Rotherhithe, and even shipwrights and dockyard carpenters. Mr. Westmoreland came, but without his daughter; and even, though this seems incredible, some of the Thames watermen, who had the grace to remember Jack Easterbrook. All the afternoon Cudjoe and Snowball, who ought to have been at church, trudged about with foaming tankards and mugs, giving everybody who desired an honest glass to drink the Lieutenant's health (he was still only a midshipman, but they gave him promotion). And there were a thousand questions asked one after the other, so that long before the evening, when we were to have an account of the voyage, we knew pretty well what had happened. And, though it was Sunday, there was brewed a great bowl of punch for the evening; and in the end the Admiral was carried to bed, and many of the guests retired with a rolling gait and thick voice; while, as for me, the next morning showed, by trembling fingers and headache, besides the

memory of uncertain steps, that I, too, had rejoiced among the rest beyond the limits of soberness. Among the company were, first, my father, the Vicar of St. Paul's; then Captain Petherick, the commissioner of the King's Yard; Mr. Stephen Pett, who hath a shipbuilding yard of his own, where many fair vessels have been built; Mr. Mostyn, Cocket-writer in His Majesty's Custom House; Lieutenant Hepworth, formerly of General Powlett's Regiment of Marines; Mr. Underhill; Mr. Shelvocke (the younger), who had himself been round the world in the year 1720, as everybody knows who has read the account of his father's voyage, and the malicious book concerning the same voyage written by Mr. Betagh, his Captain of Marines. There was also Mr. Brinjes. And I, for one, presently observed with pride that we had here assembled together in one room—a thing which could hardly be compassed in any other town, except Portsmouth, Plymouth, and Chatham—three men who had at three separate times sailed upon the great unknown Pacific; and of these, two had actually circumnavigated the globe.

I have observed, having been born and brought up among men who delight in telling and hearing stories of battle, escapes, shipwreck, and the like, that the hero of a hundred adventures is seldom as ready to tell them as he who hath in all his life experienced but one; and that, often enough, not of his own seeking, but against his own desire, and even entered upon in bodily fear. Yet Virgil makes Æneas relate his wanderings movingly and in the finest verse; and Shakespeare tells how Othello would, in the hearing of Desdemona, fight his battles over again. As for Jack, he had encountered so many perils and met with so many adventures, and those of so extraordinary a kind, that one would not expect the hundredth part of them to be told in one evening. They were enough to fill a dozen books of travel, such as are generally written, most of them with no adventures more terrible than the upsetting of a coach or the appearance of a footpad; nay, I have never seen any books which contained such wonders as Jack had witnessed, if we except the voyages of Captain Clipperton, Captain

Shelvocke, and Commodore Anson; and none of these commanders ever sailed among the islands which the 'Countess of Dorset' visited. Yet he was not able, at first, to tell us much about them; and it was only by continual questioning and persuading him to talk, with the map lying open before him, that we could get him to unburden his mind of some of the things he had seen and undergone. Some men —of whom Jack was one—are so constituted that they do not seem to understand what people want to know, or what they should tell them. Our hero was not reticent, I am sure, from any fear of appearing boastful, because sailors love above all things to speak of their own adventures; but because, first, he felt, on this the first day of his return, new and strange to us, after six years of absence; and next, he was never good at narrating, save stories of fight; and, further, it is not easy for anyone to gather up immediately, and at short notice, all the recollections of the past six years. When a man has been two years with savages, or two years in a Spanish or French prison, he is apt

to forget some of the things which happened before, even though they passed among the unknown islands of the Pacific Ocean.

'As for her course, now,' he began, doubtfully. He had before him the map of the world, on Mercator's projection, by John Senex. It was my father's copy, and although the map is not on so large a scale as a ship's chart, yet it was big enough to serve. Deptford is too insignificant to be marked, and Jack's finger, when he would indicate the ship's starting-point, covered the whole of Kent, Middlesex, Essex, and Surrey. 'As for her course, now,' he repeated, looking at the map doubtfully, considering how best to begin. Perhaps he had forgotten how to use a map, since he had not seen one for four years. Castilla was standing on one side, looking over his shoulder, I at the other side. The Admiral sat opposite, his red face filled with benevolence and affection. Surely, there never was a kindlier face in the world. Behind him and beside the fireplace was his lady, not carried away so greatly by the general emotion, partly because she never

entertained the same love for Jack that filled her husband's breast, and partly because, like most women, she was not in the least degree

interested in foreign lands and savage races, and partly because she knew not the bottom of a map from the top. The gentlemen sat round

the table as they chose, and at the sideboard the two negroes had charge of the smoking bowl. I love negroes for one thing: that is, for their fellow-feeling when any occasion for rejoicing and feasting arises. They would like the whole of their lives to be spent in feasting, drinking, and laughing. For instance, I do not suppose that these two rascals had given one single thought to Jack during the whole of his six years' absence, yet here they were, their mouths broad grinning, their faces shining, their eyes twinkling and dancing, moving nimbly about with the glasses, taking care, with the greatest zeal, that the Admiral's was kept always full, and that none of the gentlemen should be allowed so much as to glance inquiringly in the direction of the bowl. Had it been the return of their own son they could not have shown a livelier joy. N.B.—Later in the evening, when the Admiral was in bed and the guests gone, they finished the bowl themselves; and had it not been for Jack, who in the morning was so good as to pump upon them, they certainly would have incurred the wrath of the

Admiral, for they were even at eight o'clock in the morning, and after a night's sleep, still more than half seas over.

'Oh, Jack,' said Castilla, 'to think that you should remember her course after all these years!'

'Easy a bit, my lad,' said the Admiral. 'Take another glass before we begin. Gentlemen, fill up. Fill up the gentlemen's glasses, ye black rogues! This is a joyful evening—an evening out of ten thousand. And to think that none of us knew him except Bess, the Penman's girl! Castilla, my dear, where were your eyes?'

'Indeed, Sir, I was thinking of the Vicar's discourse. Else, I am sure I should have known Jack.'

'And where were yours, Luke, and where were mine—to treat him like a ragamuffin tarpaulin? Well, well! Fill up Mr. Jack's glass, Snowball. Drink, my lad; Castilla loves a sailor who can take his whack. Drink her health as I drink thine, dear lad.'

Castilla laughed. She loved soberness and

temperance; but Jack did not come home every day.

'As for her course, now,' said the Admiral.

'We sailed from Deptford——'

'You did, my boy, and I well remember the day, six years ago, when the "Countess of Dorset" dipped her ensign and fired her salute. The boy tells me, gentlemen, that for four years he has never tasted punch—poor lad; nor quaffed a tankard of ale—think of it; nor sat down to a comfortable pipe of tobacco; nor known the comforts of a hammock in a seaworthy and weather-tight vessel. For four years! Your Reverence, it is Sunday evening; but, with respect to the cloth,' the Admiral turned his face, rosy and beaming as the setting sun, to my father, 'when the prodigal son came home did his father ask the Chaplain, who, I suppose, was a Levite, whether it was the Sabbath Day, before he ordered the fatted calf to be killed and roasted?'

'We do not learn that he did so,' replied my father. 'Though doubtless——'

'Then, Sir, suffer us to believe, for our

satisfaction at the present juncture, that the event, like another one of later occurrence, happened on the Sabbath Day. Then have we authority of Holy Writ for making merry on the Sabbath Day.'

At this display of wit they all laughed without rebuke from the Vicar.

'Go on, Jack; go on, my lad. I must still be talking, when it is Jack we want to hear. Your health, my lad, your health. I never thought to see thy honest phiz again. Thy hand again, Jack. This is a joyful evening, gentlemen. Damme, I say again, a joyful evening.' Yet the tears stood in his eyes.

We were all moved, and the Admiral more than any. But Mr. Brinjes sat in his place, his one eye, like a ball of fire, fixed on Jack. I knew that he was recalling his own voyage in the Southern Seas, and thinking of his treasure. It was as if some scent or fragrance of the islands which he loved to talk about was clinging to Jack.

Then our returned prodigal went on with

his narrative, and if the interruptions of the Admiral are not set down, with his ejaculations and oaths, it is because, were everything to be told, no history would ever come to an end. Wherefore they are omitted; nor have I tried to set down all that Jack said, nor a tenth part, on this evening, because half the time he was answering questions from Mr. Shelvocke, who must needs show his knowledge of those seas, and from Mr. Brinjes, who had also sailed upon them, and from Captain Petherick, who was a great lover of geography. I have also ventured to omit that part of his narrative which related to the behaviour of the crew, the sailing qualities of the ship, and those matters generally which concern sailors, and which would only be understood by them. 'We sailed, as you remember, Admiral, carrying with us twenty-five guns, with a crew of 120 men all told, and provisions for twenty-four months. Gentlemen, with submission, I venture to remark that no navy provision exists which will last twenty-four months, for the biscuit becomes weevilly, and the pork and beef rancid; and

as to the cheese and the salt butter—but there !——'

'He is right,' said Mr. Underhill.

'We were fortunate, however, and fell in, before we suffered much from this cause, with provisions of another kind. The last land that we saw was the Start, and the next was Cape Finisterre. We then stood away for the island of Teneriffe, where we designed to take in wine, rum, and brandy, the Captain being of opinion that to keep a merry heart in the crew—which is, above all things, desirable on a long voyage—a double ration is often necessary; wherefore, we laid in at the town of Santa Cruz a great store of malmsey, canary, and verdina, which is a greenish-coloured wine and strong bodied, but keeps well in hot climates.

'After leaving Teneriffe, we were becalmed for three weeks, during which, I remember, we caught two very fine sharks, off which the men regaled. Then we touched at St. Helena. After this we were driven off our course by the trade-wind, and sighted Tristan d'Acunha;

we put in at the Cape, and, after leaving Algoa Bay, we steered nor'-nor'-east, passing the southern point of Madagascar, where we expected to meet with pirates.'

'I fear they are all dead,' said Mr. Brinjes. 'Their settlement was on the north-east coast, which is not so full of fever as the south-west. Dead now, they must be, every man. And I doubt if their children, darkies all, would have the spirit to carry on the business.'

'Our course was now to the coast of New Holland, the object of the voyage being, as the Captain told us, to discover new lands, and, if possible, countries where British settlements might rival those of Spain in the Manillas and the Ladrones.'

'You did not visit the Manillas, then?' said Mr. Shelvocke. 'There is nothing in those seas which can surpass the Manillas in beauty and fertility.'

'The Pope,' said my father, 'pretended, in his pride, to confer upon the Spaniards all the lands beyond the Atlantic, including, I suppose,

Magellanica or the Pacific Ocean, which was not then discovered.'

'We had bad weather crossing this great ocean, whereon we sailed for two months, or thereabout, with never a sight of land. Then we began to find seaweed, with cuttle bones and bonitos, and after two or three days we sighted land; but finding nothing except rocks and foul ground, we stood off again.' His finger was now on the coast of the great unknown southern island called New Holland. 'On the third or fourth day we found an opening in the land, and anchored in two fathoms and a half of water. We called the place Shark's Bay, and we stayed here a week. The shore is shelving to the sea, and we saw there a kind of animal like the West Indian maccaroon, save that it has long hind legs on which it jumps; and I think it was there that we found an ugly kind of guana which stinks. The natives were naked black men, some of them painted with a kind of pigment, and their hair frizzled. They seem to live on shell-fish, and carry lances with heads of flint.'

'I had hoped,' said my father, 'to hear of some polite and civilised nation with arts and sciences, and traditions of the patriarchal religion, and of gentle manners.'

'Their manners,' Jack continued, 'are beastly, and their ways are treacherous; and as for religion, we saw no sign of any. How can savages have any religion who live on mussels? I have lived on them myself, and felt no promptings of religion all the time, but only discontent and swearing. Well, gentlemen, we continued our voyage, and I dare say we carried the coast line a good bit farther than this map shows; but my memory serves me not on this point, and my own as well as the ship's log was lost when the ship was cast away.'

'Our course,' said Mr. Shelvocke, 'was north of these latitudes. Wherefore, I have never visited the shores of New Holland. This I regret the less, having seen the Manillas.'

'When we reached the most southerly point, which, I dare say, may be somewhere near to this place on the map, the Captain called together his Lieutenants, the Master and

the Captain of Marines, and, over a cheerful glass, opened his mind to them, as we presently heard in the gun-room. He said that his orders were general, and that it was reported by those who had sailed on those seas, particularly by those who thought it no sin to hoist the Jolly Roger——'

'It is not,' said Mr. Brinjes, stoutly, 'provided that it is in Spanish waters only. I have myself sailed under the crossbones and skull. Sin? Why, it is a commendable action to maul and harass the Spaniards.'

'The Captain said that it was reported,' Jack continued, 'that there are islands in those seas of incredible wealth, compared with which Mr. Shelvocke's Manillas are poor; but that the Spaniards either endeavour to keep the secret of these islands to themselves, or they have not the curiosity to seek them out. His design was, therefore, to seek for these islands, even though we might have to fight the Spaniards should we meet them; and if any place should be found to possess the wealth they are supposed to contain, then, Spaniard or no Spaniard, to plant

the flag of Great Britain upon them; and, if Heaven should prosper our enterprise, presently to return by the Straits of Magellan.

'So we steered a course north-west by north, across an open sea, with fair winds, sighting no land at all until we were in latitude 20° south, or thereabout, when we came to a great island; indeed, if it be not a part of the great Southern Continent. Gentlemen——' Jack broke off here. 'I cannot tell you all, nor a tenth part, of what we saw in these seas. There are thousands of islands, all much finer than you can imagine.'

'They are—they are,' said Mr. Brinjes. 'I have seen them myself.'

'Our own course,' said Mr. Shelvocke, jealously, 'was in the northern latitude, the islands of which are incomparable.'

'And of what kind are the people?'

'For the most part we found them gentle and generous. No travellers have ever visited these islands that we could learn; they know nothing of the Spaniards; they are black, and go naked, and they can all swim like fishes.'

'They can,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'especially the young women.'

'Of what kind is their religion?' asked the Vicar.

'I think, Sir, that they have none'—Mr. Brinjes shook his head—'at least, we saw no signs of any, though, of course, we could not talk to them in their own language. The islands are so close together that it is impossible to sail more than a day or two without coming in sight of a new archipelago; some there are which we judged as big as Ireland, perhaps, and others not more than half an acre; some there are which are only coral reefs lying in a circle round smooth water, no bigger than some of the West Indian Keys; and some there are which are covered with great mountains and volcanoes.'

'It is true—it is quite true,' said Mr. Brinjes.

'And as for the riches of them?' asked one of the company.

'I know not if there be any. We made such signs as we thought would make them

understand that we wanted gold and precious stones; but they produced none, and we believed that they have no knowledge of gold, even if there be gold in their mountains. Of pearls there must needs be plenty, seeing that there are oysters in abundance. But we saw none.'

'No gold and no jewels!' said my father. 'Happy islanders!'

'And they seem to have all things in common.'

'Wherefore the main temptations to sin,' said my father, 'are removed. Where there is no private property there can be no robbery, no envying, no jealousies, no overreaching. Oh, thrice happy people, if they knew their own happiness!'

'If we had not lost the log,' Jack continued, 'we should have covered these seas with islands never before seen, even by Dampier, Magellan, Drake, or Rogers. Now, no one knows where they are, and I alone of all living men, unless it be Mr. Brinjes, have seen them. As for our gallant company'—here he paused

and looked around him solemnly. I have noticed many sailors do the same thing; it is as if they were counting those present to be sure that they, too, are not shipwrecked men—'they are all dead by now, I doubt not. Unless some escaped, of whom I know nothing, who may be living yet among the Indians.'

'Fill his glass,' said the Admiral. 'Gentlemen, let us drink to the memory of these poor fellows, cast away, and now dead.'

'There is no such sailing,' Jack continued, 'anywhere in the world——'

'There is not,' Mr. Brinjes interrupted.

'Save for the constant temptation for the men to desert, and live in indolence among these people. Better would it have been, save for one who now sits here among you all, had the whole ship's company gone ashore and stayed there, to live in the warm air and sunshine of that climate.'

'Better to die a Christian than live a heathen,' said the Vicar.

'Well, we had the Church Service read every Sunday morning,' said Jack, 'which was

no doubt a comfortable thing for the poor fellows to think upon when the rocks were cracking their skulls like eggshells. But as for the sailing, so long as we were among the islands, it was like cruising upon a pond, with fresh fruit, and fish of all kinds, and wild birds in plenty to be shot. Sir'—he addressed the Vicar—'this place is surely the Garden of Eden, though there is in Scripture no mention made of any seas. Of this, the Captain, who was a sober and religious man, was well assured.'

'The site of the garden,' said my father, 'hath been placed in Mesopotamia, between the Tigris and Euphrates, or in Arabia Felix, or at the foot of the Caucasus, or near Damascus, but never, that I know of, in Magellanica or Oceanus Australis. And I know not how it could be there, unless the Euphrates and the Nile have greatly changed their course.'

'It cannot be anything else but the Garden of Eden,' said Jack; 'though, perhaps, in the Deluge much of it was swallowed up, and only the tops of the mountains left above water.'

'Should we ever,' said the Vicar, 'find that garden, which doubtless exists somewhere upon the earth—nay, some have pretended to have seen it—we shall also find the gate, and at the gate the angel with a flaming sword turning in every direction to keep the way of the Tree of Life. But it may very well be that, when the curse of labour was imposed upon man for the sin of Adam—in consequence of which some parts of the world were afflicted with aridity and sand, other parts were covered with ice and snow, others, again, became marshes, and others became hard and unprofitable for the toilers—that some parts were left by merciful design in their virginal and pristine beauty, just as they left the hand of the Creator at the dawn of the first Sabbath, being reserved for this generation to discover, so that faith might be strengthened, and true religion revived in the world, by so striking a proof of the Divine Narrative. But let us go on, for the hour groweth late.'

'Alas! gentlemen, there is very little more to tell, and the rest of the history of the ill-fated

"Countess of Dorset" is all misfortune. We came, at length, to an end of these islands, which we parted with to our great regret; and so, with open sea, steering now east or south-east, with design to make Juan Fernandez or the Island of Masafuera. When we were within thirty or forty leagues, according to our reckoning, of these islands, there fell upon us a dreadful gale, or succession of gales, which lasted a week or more, so far as I remember, the ship driving before the wind under bare poles. Then we lost our foremast, and presently both mainmast and mizenmast went by the board; and for great waves and the force of the wind, I never experienced the like. We rigged a jury-mast with difficulty, and a foresail to steady her head. By this time our bulwarks were broken, and our boats stove in, so that there was very little hope left us, except that the gale might abate, in which case we might keep her afloat—for now she had sprung a leak, and the men were kept day and night to the pump—until we could make some kind of raft. As for our guns, we heaved them over-

board, with everything else that would lighten the ship. Gentlemen, the gale did not abate; on the contrary, it blew harder, if that were possible; and I think everybody on board had given up hope. As for the men, some of them did their duty to the last: but some of them became mutinous, and wanted to get to the spirit store, and go down happy. Which is, I take it, a fool's way of dying.'

'It is,' said the Vicar.

'I have seen them die that way,' said Mr. Brinjes. 'Some men have even walked the plank, after drinking a pint or so of rum, dancing and laughing, and with the end of a song on their lips. But, no doubt, 'tis better to go down sober. Besides, there is always some hope for a sober man, but none for a drunken one.'

'I do not know, gentlemen, how long this lasted. We unshipped our rudder, I remember, which finished our misfortunes, for now the ship lay like a log in the trough of waves, which rolled her about as they pleased. And how many were washed overboard I know not;

nor how many were left in the ship when at last she struck the rocks, and was beaten to pieces. I would rather face a dozen broadsides than wait again, for a week or more, with Death almost certain at the end of it. To judge from the haggard faces of those who waited with me, and to remember my own mind—why, we died a hundred deaths in the mere apprehension and waiting for it. Most of us died in earnest before long. For one morning, when the daylight came, we saw before us a most dreadful sight—namely, the coast of Patagonia, which is the most inhospitable, I suppose, in the whole world, and the most terrible, by reason of its rocks and precipices. We were driving right upon the coast. Then, indeed, we gave ourselves up for lost. When we struck, the sea lifted her and beat her against the rocks, breaking and grinding her timbers as if she had been nothing bigger than a Portsmouth wherry; and the waves broke over her at the same time, washing the men from the places where they were clinging. As for me, I was carried off, and what happened

to me afterwards I know not, save that I lost consciousness, and when I recovered I found myself lying on a ledge of rock, but how I got there, whether carried thither by some great wave or upon some piece of wreck, I know not. The first thing I did was to make sure that I had no bones broken. I was not indeed hurt in any way, save that from head to foot I was covered with bruises, which were of small account. And then I turned to look at the wreck. We were surely landed in the worst place in the world; it was a narrow creek or bay between high cliffs, into which the sea rushed with violence inexpressible. Already the ship was broken up save for the after part, where there were still clinging two or three poor wretches; below my feet in the boiling water, grinding against each other, were pieces of wreck, and, most terrible to see, there were mangled bodies of our poor fellows, dashed against the rocks and among the broken timbers. It is wonderful to think that any of us escaped.

'At first I thought that I was alone, the

only man saved. But there were others, and I found that most of them, like myself, could not tell how they had got ashore, and why they were not, like their shipmates, dashed to pieces. There were fourteen of us in number, and no more came ashore; wherefore, seeing the violence of the waves and the impossibility of swimming in such a sea, we concluded that the rest were all drowned. When the wind abated, which was the next day, we managed to get up to the rocks some of the timber and wreck washed ashore, and made some kind of shelter; but we could not light a fire, and it was now the winter season in these latitudes, and cold. There were one or two casks of provisions which reached the shore unbroken and not touched by the sea; we lived upon them while they lasted, our drink being rain-water, of which there was plenty. When this supply ceased we had nothing to subsist upon at all but shell-fish, of which there were at first great quantities, but we presently exhausted them, and then we had to leave our hut, such as it was, and to move on along the coast in order

to find more. We were all the time as men in a dream, not knowing where we were nor what to do; all day we gazed stupidly at each other, and all night we crouched together for warmth. But when the time came that we must leave our rocks we began to take counsel. My companions were common sailors, rude and ignorant fellows; and as for me, I knew nothing except that I was certain that we must be somewhere upon the western shore of South America, that part of it which is called Patagonia. Now, if we marched south, we should in time come to the Straits of Magellan, through which there might pass some ship; but how long we should wait, or how great the distance might be, we knew nothing. And every day's march would bring us into colder and more desolate regions. On the other hand, if we marched north, we might, in the long run, reach the Spanish settlements, which are reported to stretch southward very far. But, again, should we reach them, it was most likely that they would murder us, or hand us over to the Inquisition to be burned alive for heretics.

However, we decided in the end to march north, which we did, leaving behind four of our number who had died, partly of cold and partly of flux, brought on by the shell-fish diet, which afflicted us all in various ways. As for myself, it covered my whole body with an intolerable itching, which flew from one part to another, so that I got no rest day or night.'

'It is a prurigo,' said Mr. Brinjes. 'There is no cure for it but a change of diet.'

'We were by this time in as miserable a plight as ever befell shipwrecked sailors, for the weather was continually wet and cold; as for our clothes, they were rags, wet through day and night; we were pinched with hunger; we had not a shoe to our feet; there was not a single tool or weapon, not even a knife among us. A man, gentlemen, without tools is in sorry case. So we began our way along the coast, which we durst not leave, partly for fear of wild beasts and natives, and partly because while we kept near the sea we should not starve. We wandered in this way, seeking such shelter as we could find, and always wet,

cold, and half starved, for a month or two—I know not how long. But one day we fell in with a tribe of Indians. By this time, I remember, there were only eight of us left. These men came to meet us, brandishing spears and threatening to kill us; while we, for our part, had nothing to do except to make signs showing how helpless and harmless we were. So they took us with them: and I think I never spent a happier evening than the first, when we lay upon the ground about a great fire, with broiled fish to eat and sealskin to cover us. We had not been warm or dry for a matter of three months. As for living with them, we soon got tired of that life, except two of our company, who took Indian wives, and resolved to continue among them. For, like us, they lived by the seashore, having no knowledge of any agriculture, and devoured fish and mussels, oysters, and so forth, all of which were collected for them by their wives. I have never seen any more dexterous than these poor women in diving and catching fish, which they would drive, by frightening, into

some small creek or inlet of the sea, whence they could not escape and were easily captured. They also collected and eat certain berries, which were nauseous at first, but which we presently grew to consider as useful against the disorders caused by a fish diet. But as for the dirt and the vermin, and the savage nature of the life we led, I cannot so much as speak of these things. Sometimes when, by reason of storm and gales, fish was scarce, we were driven to live on the flesh of seals, and that putrid and stinking. And because we depended so much upon the mussels and oysters, we were obliged continually to shift our quarters, and slowly drew more and more northwards, until at last we arrived at the most southerly of the Spanish settlements, which consisted of nothing else than a kind of convent and a church with four priests. For my own part, I approached the place with terror, thinking that the stake would be set up, and the flames would be consuming us as soon as the priests should understand that we were Englishmen and Protestants. Well, gentlemen, they never so much as asked us of what religion

we were. But these good priests—your Reverence will forgive me——'

'There are charitable hearts in every country and in every religion,' said the Vicar. 'Why not in Magellanica?'

'They gave us clothes to put on; they washed and dressed our wounds, because by this time we were covered all over with sores and bad places. They gave us good food and wine to drink, and they heard our story—one of them could speak English—with tears and pity. They told us that we must be sent to the nearest Spanish port as prisoners; but bade us be of good courage, because we should be treated well.'

'In these remote parts,' said the Vicar, 'the Pope and the Inquisition being so far off, there is room for the growth of human feelings, even with priests.'

'After six months of living among them—a better and a more charitable brotherhood I never hope to meet—there came an opportunity of conveying us to the island of Chiloe, where there is a Spanish Governor. Now, I reckon

that the ship was cast away two years and a half after we sailed, it being then midwinter, which, on the coast of Patagonia, is in the month of July; and I think that we lived with the Indians for the space of two years—it was time enough to wear out all that were left of our rags, so that we went into the convent with nothing but sealskin over our shoulders, tied round the waist with a thong of sealskin leather. We stayed at Chiloe, where we were treated more hardly than with the priests, yet not cruelly, for three or four months, when the Governor was able to send us on to the port of Callao.'

'He is now,' said the Admiral, 'prisoner of the Spanish, and within reach of the Bloody Inquisition. Snowball, fill up Mr. Easterbrook's glass. Keep it full, ye lubber! at such a time he needs all the punch he can swallow.'

'Out of the whole ship's company, there remained now but six. They put us in prison, but they gave us wine and food, chiefly beans, bread, and onions, as good as they had themselves, and sometimes chocolate. Presently there came a priest, and began to talk about our

heretical condition, and the dangers we ran should we continue in obstinacy. This made us mighty uneasy, as you may imagine; because the Inquisition—the Holy Inquisition, as they call it—is established at Lima, whither, the Padre informed us, we should shortly be taken. It seemed likely that we had only escaped drowning to suffer the rack and the stake. I hope, gentlemen, that I should have done my duty even to the end, had there been no escape. Meantime, I cast about how to get out of their clutches. We had a good deal of liberty within the prison, and many visitors came there bringing cigarettos, which are rolls of paper containing tobacco, to the prisoners, who were mostly half-caste, in prison for stabbing, or sailors for mutiny, the authorities caring little how their prisoners pass the time so long as they are kept in limbo. In this way, I made the acquaintance of an honest Frenchman, captain of a trading brig, who, I found, hated the priests and all their works and took pity on me, seeing that I must either become a convert or look to be burned. He, therefore, brought me a disguise, and

conveyed me safely out of prison on board his own ship, where I remained stowed away in the hold until he sailed out of harbour. As for the other men, three of them recanted their errors, as they called it, and walked in the procession at an Auto da Fé at Lima, where the other poor fellows, who stuck by their guns, were burned alive.'

''Tis a damnable nation,' said Mr. Brinjes.

'Say rather,' said the Vicar, 'that it is a nation under the curse of a gloomy superstition, which prompts them to commit these cruelties.'

'As for me, I worked before the mast, and found the French sailors, when I could talk their lingo, an honest set of fellows. But when we got to Brest, we learned that war had broken out; and so I was a prisoner again, and marched as a common sailor, with others in the same plight, from one strong place to another, till we came to St. Omer.'

CHAPTER XII.

HOW JACK THANKED BESS.

EARLY in the evening, when the common sort had all gone away, well filled with the Admiral's best October,

and before the gentlemen arrived, Jack left us, and stole quite unnoticed from the house. As he left us, so he returned, no one having observed that he had been absent for a moment. Yet we were all of us talking and thinking of no one else, and believed that he was still among us. So, in a play at the theatre, when the mind is fully charged and occupied with the hero, so that one can think of nothing but his adventures, we do not perceive that he is no longer on the stage before our eyes, and, when he presently returns, we do not remember that he has ever been out of our sight, and all that has passed seems to have been done in his presence.

But why Jack left us and whither he went, I have since been told, and that, as one may say, on credible authority—namely, by the only person who knows.

In short, he left us to go in search of Bess, his heart being, already, inflamed by the thought of her beauty, and fired with gratitude because, of all his old friends, she alone recognised him. Ulysses was recognised by none but his dog.

Why, Jack would have been less than human, a mere senseless log, had he not been moved by this circumstance. And so far from senseless his was a heart as easily inflamed as touchwood.

Bess was sitting on the floor before the fire, her father being somewhere abroad, I suppose, in conversation with his friends and cronies, the sexton and the barber. It was Sunday evening, therefore she had no knitting or work of other kind in her hands. She could not read, and therefore she had not taken one of her father's books; and she was alone, therefore she was not talking. Outside, the night had already fallen, but she was not one of those who waste good money by burning candle and fire at the same time, unless for the sake of work. The red firelight played upon her cheeks, and made them glow; and upon her eyes, and made them red balls; and upon the walls of the room, which were covered with specimens of the Penman's art, pasted on the wainscot; and on the sideboard, where stood the candlesticks of brass and the snuffers,

polished and bright; with the house pewter, which shone like silver, so good a housewife was this girl. Her hands lay folded in her lap, and she was leaning forwards as if reading faces in the red coals, as children sometimes love to play. I think she saw one face only, and that a strange wild face, with matted hair and long beard, and a bloody clout across the forehead. As to her thoughts—who can read the thoughts that crowd into the head of a young girl? I would not dare to say that up to that time Bess was in love with her old playfellow; yet it is certain, because Mr. Brinjes spoke so much of him, that he often occupied her mind. Nor was it, I venture to say, all on Jack's account that she would listen to none of Aaron Fletcher's advances. Yet she must have been hard-hearted, indeed, had this home-coming failed to move her soul. I have sometimes thought that if at this time Jack had made no advances to her, she must presently have taken Aaron and thought no more of her old playfellow, save as of a gallant gentleman belonging to a class above her. No

man can speak positively of a woman's mind; but I am assured that it is seldom in the nature of a woman to love any man—though she may greatly admire him—until he hath first shown and proved by words and looks that he thinks of her and loves her. Therefore, if Jack had made no advances——however, it is idle to talk of advances: such a man as Jack doth not make advances: they are for cooler and more cautious men; he lands, charges, and carries by storm the fortress which expected to be besieged by well-known rules.

Now, as she sat there watching the coals glowing in the fire, Bess suddenly started and her heart ceased to beat, for at the door she heard a step. She remembered that step after six long years; and the latch was lifted, and Jack himself came in—a thing she had not so much as ventured to hope, though she expected that he might in a day or two call to see her father, if he should still remember his former instructor.

She sprang to her feet, half-afraid, yet rejoicing.

'Bess!' he cried, hoarsely. 'You had not forgotten me?'

He was dressed now, shaven, and washed; a tall and handsome man, though pale and somewhat hollow in the cheek.

'Bess!' he repeated, holding out both hands, 'have you nothing to say to me?'

'Oh, Jack!' she whispered timidly. But now she was trembling, and really afraid of him, because there was a look in his eyes which frightened her; a strange look it is, which painters, for the most part, have failed to catch; it is one which makes the eyes soft and glowing; it is the look of love and longing. Bess had never seen that look, and it frightened her.

'Jack,' she said, 'shall I go and look for father?'

'Oh!' he answered, 'you knew me, Bess!' His voice was husky. 'All the rest had forgotten me; but you knew me. Look for your father? Not yet, Bess! Not yet! Oh, Bess!' He said no more, but caught her hands, drew her towards him, and kissed her a thousand times.

Then, in a moment, all her love went out to him. She gave him all her heart. Thenceforward she was no longer afraid of him; yet she was his servant and his slave, though he called her mistress.

'My dear,' he said presently, 'let me look at my sweetheart. Nay, the firelight will do to light those eyes; no need of a candle. Oh, the sweet face! And what a tall girl she is! Is it the firelight or her cheeks, or is she blushing because her lover hath kissed her? And oh, the rosy lips! Kiss me, Bess. Kiss me, and tell me that you love me. My dear, I had forgotten no one at home—no one; but until you caught my hands to-day, I did not know how much I loved you. And now, tell me, pretty, hast thou sometimes thought of Jack?'

'Oh, yes,' she told him. 'I have never forgotten, never; and I knew you were not drowned, whatever they said, and Mr. Brinjes always declared that some day you would come home again. Often and often have I gone to Philadelphy and inquired of her concerning a young sailor—meaning you, Jack—but I did

not tell her who it was, and always her reply was that he was safe, and would come home again, though to be sure, she said, there were dangers in the way. She is a proper witch, and knows. But, oh! Jack, go away; this is foolishness; you must not kiss me any more, because you are a gentleman, and I am only a simple girl, and the daughter of a plain man. You must not talk of love to me; you must not think of me, Jack. I know you would not laugh at me, and mock me; but you must not think of me, Jack. Why, there are fine ladies in plenty who would die for love of you!'

'And could you die for love of me, Bess? Oh! how could I live so long without thee?'

'Oh, Jack!' she murmured, laying her head upon his shoulder, 'I would rather die of love for you than live for the love of someone else! and oh! if you left off loving me I should sit down and pray to die at once.'

He kissed her again—I know not how many times he kissed her—telling her, which was quite true, because his thoughts ran not that way, that he cared not a fig for all the

fine ladies in London town, with their nimby-namby, piminy ways, and their hoops and paint; but he loved an honest girl with roses of her own in her cheeks, who would love him in return. And so their pretty love-talk went on, with thee and thou, and kisses sweet as honey to this girl, who knew not how or why she should conceal her joy and her love.

'I never knew,' Bess told me afterwards, 'no, I never knew what happiness could be until I sat that evening with my sweetheart's arms round my waist, and my face upon his shoulder, so that he could kiss me as often as he pleased and whisper that he loved me. Oh, why—why should he love me; he so handsome and so splendid, and I so simple a maid? What are a girl's good looks compared with a man's? And how should he be able to love one who is not a gentlewoman—he who might, had he chosen, have married a countess?'

When he left her, which was all too soon, because the Admiral would be expecting him, the girl fell upon her knees and prayed. This was a thing (she confessed it to me herself)

which she had never done before in her life, except in church, and according to the Forms contained in the Book of Common Prayer. If one may venture so to speak of a Book which hath engaged the thoughts and labours of learned and pious men since the foundation of the Church—I mean the Book of Common Prayer—there is one unfortunate omission in its forms: it provides, that is to say, for all the other great events in life—namely, Birth, Baptism, Marriage, the Arrival of Children, Sickness, and Death; but there is no Form of Prayer for the Betrothal of a man and a maid. Yet there are many appropriate Lessons that might be taken for it from the Old and New Testament; and there are many grateful and joyful Psalms; and there are love-sick verses—better, surely, were never written—especially in the Song of Solomon; and, without doubt, if ever there were occasion for prayer and praise, it is when a pair of lovers promise in private what they will presently promise in the sight of the congregation. Bess, poor child, knew no prayer fit for the occasion; but she

knelt upon the floor and with tears she thanked God for the safe return of her lover, and implored Him to extend His continual protection over him.

When Mr. Westmoreland came home at half-past eight, he was astonished to find that his daughter had forgotten to put out the bread and cheese and beer. Heard one ever of housewife forgetting to lay the supper? And though he talked about nothing but Jack Easterbrook —his unexampled sufferings and his wonderful and providential preservation — this strange daughter of his was so cold and unfeeling about her old playfellow that she hardly said a word, but made haste to go to bed, where she was removed from her father's chatter, and could lie contentedly awake all night long, her foolish heart beating with the joy of this great happiness.

CHAPTER XIII.

JACK ASHORE.

THE next day, accompanied by the Admiral and Captain Petherick, Jack went to the Navy Office in Seething Lane to report himself.

And here began trouble he did not expect. For, seeing that they had long since written off the ship as cast away, and her company as dead, at first it appeared as if Jack had lost his seniority for certain, even if he had not been removed from the King's service. The latter view was stoutly maintained by the clerks, who argued that if a man has been written off as dead, he must be dead, or else—a thing impossible and absurd, if not treasonable—the Navy Office must be charged with error; so that, if he should afterwards be so rash as to return,

he must either be considered out of the service, or must begin again at the bottom of the ladder; otherwise their books would have to be rewritten; very likely the Estimates must be amended, and, perhaps, even a new audit undertaken. There was much correspondence on this subject carried on between the various departments; and, for aught I know, it may still be going on. While it was still in agitation, they began to send him about, like a ball at the game of cricket, from one office to another. First they sent him to the Surveyor's Department, which required him to make a return of the ship's stores and their expenditure up to the conclusion of the voyage; and asked him, also, to produce the purser's, bo's'n's, and carpenter's accounts, the muster-book and the log-book, these books being always, by regulation, required of the Captain on his return. The clerks in the Navy Office, who receive fifty pounds a year, and live at ten, or even twenty, times that rate in war time—thus showing how an honest man may prosper merely by the handling of ship's books and

the passing of the Captain's papers—gave this young officer, from whose handling no profit could be obtained for themselves, as much trouble as Jacks-in-office possibly can; and, being themselves bound and tied by all kinds of rules, they are able to hamper grievously any officer who doth not first grease their palms.

Next, when Jack expected to receive the six years' pay which was certainly due to him, there was trouble with the Comptroller's Department, which contended that, as he had not served for more than two years, he was entitled to no more than so much pay, and that only when it could be proved that he had served to the satisfaction of the Captain, who, we know, was dead and gone; and that, as regards the four years of wandering and captivity, they must not count as service at all.

Thirdly, when Jack asked permission to pass his examination in seamanship for Lieutenant's rank, it was objected by the clerks of the Secretary's Department, first, that he had not, in accordance with the regulations, put in

his log-books or journals; secondly, that he could not show the certificate of the Captain; and, thirdly, that he had not served for the six years required by the rules of the service. At all these vexatious delays Jack lost his temper, and would, in the Navy Office itself, give the clerks, in good fo'ks'le English, his opinion as to their motives and their honesty, which, of course, exasperated these gentlemen, and made them stand out still more stiffly for the letter of the law.

Now, while these things were under consideration, the Commissioners themselves, being informed of what had happened, sent for Jack and examined him personally concerning the ship's course, the discoveries she had made, the natural riches of the Islands among which he had sailed, and the possibility of establishing settlements and posts upon them which might prove effective in restraining the insolence of the Spanish, and in preventing the establishment of the French power in those regions. Finally, they instructed him to draw up, without further delay, a Report upon the voyage, as full as his

memory would allow, for the information of the Commissioners and the Government, containing all that he could remember of the course, and what he had observed concerning those islands, and especially on the force of the Spaniards on the South American shores; and, which was no doubt gall and wormwood to the clerks, my Lords the Commissioners were graciously pleased to order that the rules of the service should in this case be suspended, and that, in consideration of Mr. Easterbrook's previous good character, and undoubted sufferings after the wreck of his ship—for which he could not be held in any way accountable—his seniority should be restored to him, his years of wandering and captivity should be all counted as years of service, and that he should therefore receive full pay for the whole six years of service as midshipman on board a first-rate—namely, at two pounds five shillings a month, which made the handsome sum of one hundred and sixty-two pounds; and, lastly, that he should be permitted, on passing his examination, to assume the rank and uniform of Lieutenant, with the

assurance of a commission to a ship as soon as it was possible to find one for him. This promise was given him so gravely, and by so great a personage, that Jack placed the most certain trust in it.

It was easier for Jack to pass his examination in seamanship and navigation, and to put on his new uniform, than to write the Report asked of him; for he had never the pen of a ready writer, nor had he the least knowledge of the art of composition; he had forgotten how to spell even simple words, having been deprived of books for four years; and he had almost forgotten how to write. He therefore, by the Admiral's advice, sought the help of my father, who questioned him minutely on every point; and then, with the assistance of the charts, drew up, with his own hand, the required Report; though, with pardonable license, it purported to be written by none other than Mr. Easterbrook. It contained all the information which the author could elicit by careful and repeated examination, and, if published, would have proved a work of the greatest curiosity and in-

struction, embellished with the charm of learned and scholarly style which was so much admired in my father's sermons, enriched with reflections proper for the various scenes and adventures through which the (supposed) writer passed, and made useful for meditation by scriptural references. The Report was accompanied by a chart showing part of the western coast of New Holland, with that portion of the Pacific Ocean lying south of the Equator over which the 'Countess of Dorset' had sailed. This part of the sea was depicted, by the hand which drew the chart, as covered with islands, on both sides of the ship's way, lying as thick as daisies on a grass border. Mr. Westmoreland it was who drew the chart; but he was advised and assisted by Jack himself, and by Mr. Brinjes. He painted the water blue, and the islands and coasts red. Another hand—I say not whose—decorated those parts of the ocean where no ship hath yet sailed, and nothing is yet known, with spouting whales, dolphins at play, sea-lions sporting on rocks, and canoes filled with black men. The same hand designed and

painted in the northern part of the ocean, off the Island of California, the lively representation of an engagement between the great seven-decked Spanish galleon from Manila and a small English vessel, the former striking her colours, and the latter flying the flag of her country, and not the 'Jolly Roger,' as Mr. Brinjes desired. In the left-hand corner Mr. Westmoreland drew the mariner's compass, below which he wrote a respectful dedication to my Lords the Commissioners, signed with the name of John Easterbrook, midshipman on board the 'Countess of Dorset.' The whole was finished and adorned with many flourishes, and in the Penman's finest style. He was so proud of his work that, I believe, he expected nothing less than a public commendation of it in the 'London Gazette,' with a handsome reward in money.

Strange to say, this Report, which we hoped would have been published by order of the Admiralty, was received in silence, and was never afterwards noticed at all. I know not what became of it, for Jack obtained no acknowledgment of it, nor was any praise or reward,

that I ever heard of, given to the Penman, and I suspect that the Report has never been read at all, but still lies on the shelves of the Navy Office. But, in truth, the wreck of the 'Countess of Dorset' made little stir at the time, because this intelligence arrived when the public mind was greatly agitated by the depredations of the French privateers which were now sweeping the Channel and picking up our merchantmen, and with the efforts made by the Government to protect our coasts and the seas, so that the loss of this ship more than three years before, even in so lamentable a manner, affected people little. All this done, however, Jack returned to Deptford, taking up his quarters with the Admiral, and in very good spirits, being well assured that before long he would have his commission, and that there was going to be a long and spirited war, the French having begun with great vigour, and being already flushed with success, so that they would take a great deal of beating. He had also jingling in his pocket—no sweeter music, while it lasts—the whole of his pay for six years. With this

money he was enabled to purchase a new outfit for himself, having landed, as we have seen, with nothing in the world—no, not even so much as a shirt. However, he very soon procured a sea-chest, and filled it once more with instruments, books, and a new kit, including his Lieutenant's uniform, in which it must be confessed he looked as gallant and handsome an officer as ever put on the blue and white, with none of the effeminacy and affected daintiness which too often spoil the young soldier as well as the London beau. Rather did Jack incline to the opposite vice, being, as his best friends must admit, quite deficient in his graces, ignorant of polite manners and conversation, unused to the society of ladies, and, among men, knowing but little of what some have called the coffee-house manner—that, I mean, which one learns by intercourse with strangers and general company, in which it is necessary to concede as well as demand, to yield as well as to maintain. Yet no swaggerer, or offender against the peace of quiet men, though he certainly walked with his head in the air, as if the whole world

belonged to him, and, as if it was his right, took the wall of everyone, unless an old man, a cripple, or a woman, and that with so resolute an air that even the bully-captains of the street —who are always ready to shoulder and elbow peaceful men into the gutter, and, on a mild remonstrance, to clap hand to sword-hilt, and swear blood and murder—these worthies, I say, stepped meekly, and without a word, into the mud when they beheld this young sea-lion marching towards them, over six feet in height, with shoulders and legs like a porter's for breadth and strength, splendid in his blue coat with gold-laced hat, his crimson sash, his white silk stockings, and white breeches. One thing I commended in him, that he wore his own hair, having it powdered decently, and tied in a bag with a black ribbon, a fashion which especially becomes a sailor, first, because a wig at sea, where everything should be taut and trim, must be troublesome; and secondly, because if it be blown overboard what is a man to do for another?

Fortunately for the street captains, Jack

went seldom to London, where the noise of the carts and the crowd in the streets offended him. He loved not to be jostled. And the amusements of the town pleased him not. Once we went together to see the play at Drury Lane; the piece was a comedy, very ingenious and witty, representing modern manners, or that part of modern manners which belongs to the nobility, where, I suppose, there is always intrigue, and the conversation always sparkles with epigram; the meaner kind know not this kind of life. It is pleasant to look on, and the house laughed and applauded. But Jack sat glum, and presently grew impatient and went out, and would have no more of it.

'Why,' he said, 'call this a play of modern life? If a man were to say to me one-half of what these people continually say to each other—one calling the other, though in fine words, ass, rogue, liar, or clown—I would have cleared the whole stage long ago. Where is the English spirit gone? Let us get away.'

I asked him whether he did not think the

theatre made a fine sight, with the beautiful dresses of the ladies. But even this did not please him.

'Dresses?' he said, 'why, they are designed for no other purpose than to make the poor souls hideous. Hoops, powder and paint, hair dressed up—I should like, my lad, to show you beside them a bevy of South Sea Island girls, barefooted, with a simple petticoat tied round them, and their long hair flying loose. Then would you understand how a woman should look. I know a girl'—he checked himself—'well, put her, dressed as she is in a box at the theatre, and she would be like the full moon among the twinkling stars.'

I might have replied (which is, I suppose, the truth) that women have no thought of form, and cannot understand that curve which Hogarth has drawn. Therefore, they understand not why men love a woman's figure, and regard Fashion as nothing more than an exhibition of costly and beautiful stuffs, silk, lace, and embroidery, to set off which the figure serves as a frame or machine, on which they

may be hung. Otherwise women would strive for a fashion at once becoming and fitted to the figure, which they would then never alter, as the Greeks retained always the same simple mode.

With these views as to ladies' dress, it is easy to understand that Jack found very little pleasure in visiting Ranelagh, or Vauxhall, though the freedom of Bagnigge Wells was more to his taste. Nor did he delight in the coffee-houses. I took him to the Smyrna, where the politicians resort; and to the Rainbow, where the wits and templars are found; and to the White Lion, Wych Street, where they have concerts and women who sing. But he found the conversation insipid and the manners affected.

There was only one place of public resort which he heartily approved. It was the famous mughouse in Long Lane, whither one evening we went, Mr. Brooking, the painter, taking us thither. It is frequented by many brethren of the brush, who for some reason are always more inclined to mirth and gaiety than

the sober merchant. In this room there are fiddles and a harp: the room is divided into small tables which drink to each other; a president calls for a song, and one song is followed by another till midnight, the company drinking to each other from table to table, some taking strong beer, some flip, some rumbo, and some punch. Jack admired greatly the freedom of conversation, which had nothing of the coffee-house stiffness; the heartiness with which one table would drink about with another; the tobacco and the singing, for which this mughouse was then famous, and all with so many jokes and so much laughter, that it was a pleasure to think there was so much happiness left in the world.

But most of his time Jack spent at Deptford: his mornings in the Yard among the ships, and his evenings at the Sir John Falstaff with the Admiral, or in the Officers' Room at the Gun Tavern, whither the Lieutenants and the Midshipmen resorted for tobacco and punch.

There remained the afternoon, which, had

he chosen, he might have spent with the Admiral's lady and Castilla.

'Our conversation,' said that sweet girl, 'hath no attraction for Jack. He loves sailors better than ladies, and tobacco better than tea; and he would rather hear the fiddle than the harpsichord, and the bawling by a brother-officer of a sea-song than a simple ditty from me.'

I suppose that Castilla was naturally a little hurt that Jack showed no admiration for those accomplishments, of which she was justly proud. No one played more sweetly, or sang more prettily, the songs which she knew than Castilla. Every girl likes a little attention; but this young sea-bear gave Castilla none. Every girl likes to think that her conversation is pleasing to the men: Jack showed no pleasure at all in Castilla's talk. He was thinking, though this we knew not yet, of another girl, whose charms bewitched him and made him insensible to any other woman.

At this period of his life it is certain that Jack loved not the conversation of ladies,

finding it perhaps insipid after the fo'ks'le talk he had lately experienced in the French prison and his savage life among the Indians. 'If a man,' he said, 'must needs associate with women at all, give me a woman who is not squeamish over a damn or two, and lets a man tell his story through his own way, without holding up her hands to her face and crying fie upon him for naughty words; and one who can mix him a glass of punch—ay, and help him to drink it—and won't begin to cough directly his pipe of tobacco is lit. As for your cards, and your music, and your drinking of tea, it is all very well for landsmen. I dare say you like handing about the cups for Madame and passing the cream and sugar to the young misses.'

'You can't take your tea as the Admiral takes his, Jack, with a dram of rosa solis after it.'

'What is it at best, but a medicine? Why not ask people to come and drink physic together? Why not ask Mr. Brinjes to prescribe, as he does, his tea of betony, speedwell, sago,

or camomile? Or, if you must drink messes, there is chocolate, as the Spaniards have it. But as for tea, with the strumming of a harpsichord, and playing at cards for counters, and ladies talking fiddle-faddle, and Castilla asking you if you like this, or you would rather choose the other, I confess, my lad, I cannot endure it.'

'Castilla, Jack? Surely, she is to your taste?'

'Why, as for that, she is a pretty, delicate slip of a girl; she has got soft cheeks, it is true, and brown hair. Give me a tall, strong woman, who knows her own mind and what she likes, and likes it in earnest. Give me a woman with a spice of the Devil.'

'Well, Jack,' I said, surprised that he was not already in love with Castilla, 'there are plenty of women in Deptford who are all Devil, if they can tempt you.'

He had got already, though I knew it not, a woman who possessed her full share of the element he so much desired.

In the afternoons, therefore, he did not court

the society of Castilla, but he went back to his old custom, and sat for the most part in the apothecary's parlour: not so much for the pleasure which he took in the conversation of that worthy and experienced gentleman, as that in this way he could enjoy the company of another person, who generally came in *accidentally* about the same time, but through the garden gate and the back door, while the Lieutenant marched in boldly, for all the world to see, through the shop. As Mr. Brinjes slept for the greater part of the afternoon, these two could say what they pleased to each other without fear of being overheard. And nobody so much as suspected that they were in this room except the assistant, who stood all day at the counter rolling boluses, pounding drugs, and mixing nauseous draughts. One might have chosen a sweeter smelling place for love-making, but then it had the look of a cabin, and something of its smell, and Jack found no fault with it.

'We talked,' Bess told me, in the time when her only pleasure was to think and talk about

Jack, and when there was no one but myself with whom she could speak about him, 'We talked all the afternoon in whispers so as not to wake up Mr. Brinjes, who slept among his pillows. We sat in the window seat, my head on his breast, and his fingers played with my hair, and sometimes he kissed me. Jack told me all he was going to do: he was to get his commission, and go fighting; he would go for choice where there were the hardest knocks; they would make a vast deal of prize money, and he would get promoted, and made Captain, with twelve pounds a month, and then, when he came home, he would marry me.'

'And did Mr. Brinjes,' I asked, 'never wake up, and interrupt this pastime?'

She laughed. 'Why, when he woke up, he would say, "Kiss her again, Jack. She is the best girl in Deptford. I have saved her for thee. Kiss her again." He has always been kind to me, and would never believe that Jack was drowned, and would still be talking of him, which was the reason why I knew him again

when he came back. And then, Mr. Brinjes would sit up and talk about his treasure, and how he shall some day fit out a ship, and we are all to go sailing after the treasure, which is to be my marriage portion, when it is recovered, so that Jack will marry, after all, the greatest heiress in England.'

These things I heard, I say, after Jack went to sea again, and while Bess, like so many women, sat at home waiting and praying for her lover's safe return. All that time, no one knew, or so much as suspected, what was going on. Otherwise, I fear, hard things would have been said of poor Bess by those of her own sex. Men, in such matters, judge each other more leniently, and with less suspicion.

If, now, Jack had not been first recognised by Bess; if he had not gone to see her the first day of his arrival; if—but what doth it profit to say that if such and such things had not happened other things would have turned out differently? It is vain and foolish talk. Our lives are not governed by blind chance; and

we must not doubt that, for some wise end which we know not and are not expected to know, or even to guess, all that happens to us is ordered and settled for us beforehand.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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Geo's Eve
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